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# NEW AND OLD

(SERMONS),

A MONTHLY REPERTORY OF CATHOLIC PULPIT ELOQUENCE

EMBRACING

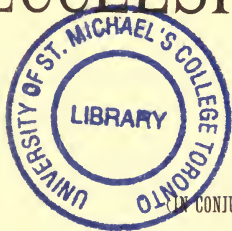
TWO SERMONS FOR EACH SUNDAY

AND

HOLY-DAY OF OBLIGATION

OF THE

## ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR.



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EDITED,

(IN CONJUNCTION WITH MANY OTHER CLERGYMEN,)

BY

Rev. AUGUSTINE WIRTH, O.S.B.

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NEWARK, N. J.

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REV. AUGUSTINE WIRTH, O.S.B.

## WHIT-SUNDAY.

## THE EFFECTS OF THE HOLY GHOST IN THE CHRISTIAN SOUL.

*"But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you."* (John 14 : 26.)

The greatest festival of the Jews was on the fiftieth day after the eating of the Paschal Lamb, for on the fiftieth day after the departure from Egypt, God had written his commandments for them with his own finger upon tablets of stone. To-day is the fiftieth day since Christ (and we in him) arose from the dead ; and we celebrate to-day the great feast of the descent of the Holy Ghost, whom the Church calls the finger of God ; the festival of that grand Teacher who has inscribed the law of love, not on tables of stone, but in our living hearts ; as the Apostle says : " You are the epistles of Christ, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God ; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart." (2 Cor. 3 : 3.) This divine Spirit has not only taught us the law but has also given us the grace whereby we may fulfil it, and he is, therefore, called the holy or *sanctifying* Ghost, because all the Saints have received their sanctity from him (St. Bern.). Hence, it is appropriate that I should explain to you, to-day, how or in what manner he produces holiness in us, and what gifts we receive from him, in order that we should :

- I. *Avoid evil*, and
- II. *Do good*.

In this all holiness consists. Come, then, O Holy Ghost, and send down upon us one ray of thy light, that we may thoroughly comprehend these two truths for thy honor and our benefit.

I. That we may *avoid evil* the Holy Ghost operates in us:

- 1. *Through the spirit of penance*,
- 2. *Through prayer for the forgiveness of sin*, and
- 3. *Through the remission of our sins*.

1. The beginning of our return to God is repentance, which is effected in us, not by our own spirit, but by the Spirit of God. This is no other spirit than that of whom it is written in the Gospel, " He



will convince the world of sin." (John 16 : 8.) Through venial sins our hearts grow tepid ; mortal sin chills them with the coldness of death ; but the Holy Ghost coming into our hearts like a glowing fire, enkindles them with the flame of divine love. "Oh what a good fire is this," says St. Ambrose, "which inflames the soul, and consumes nothing but sin !"

2. It would avail us little if we had sorrow for our sins but did not ask forgiveness for them. It is again the Holy Ghost that effects in us that we can pray with true confidence and a certain hope. "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings." (Rom. 8 : 26.) This is why he descended on the Apostles in the form of a fiery tongue, because the tongue is the member wherewith we utter our prayers. The tongue must be governed by the Holy Ghost, in prayer, for "it is the part of a man to prepare the soul, and of the Lord to govern the tongue." (Prov. 16 : 1.) By sin we wander from our heavenly Father like lost children ; but when we return to him by sincere repentance and beg for pardon for our evil deeds it is the Holy Ghost through whom we cry "Abba ! Father ; for the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God." (Rom. 8 : 16.)

3. This is what he effects in our hearts, my brethren, but what does he do in the heart of the Father ? As he supplicates within us for forgiveness of our sins, so he pardons those sins, in the Father and together with the Father. In the depths of our hearts he is our Mediator and Intercessor with the Father ; but he is at the same time our Lord in the heart of the Father. He it is who gives us that for which he inspires us to pray, and who inflames us with hope whilst he urges the Father to have mercy upon us. That the forgiveness of sin is especially ascribed to the Holy Ghost, the Holy Scriptures affirm. For no sooner had our Saviour said to the Apostles, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," than he immediately added, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained." (John 20 : 23.)

II. Now comes the question: What does the Holy Ghost do with us in order to make us *do good* ?

1. *He inspires the memory ;*
2. *He enlightens the understanding ;*
3. *He inflames and strengthens the will.*

1. He inspires good thoughts in the memory, and thereby destroys

sloth. Before the descent of the Holy Ghost "there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming." (Acts 2 : 2.) "If you pay attention to the good inspirations which move you to be converted, you shall hear the voice of the most high God" (Ezech. 1 : 24); give, then, the glory to the divine Spirit, and supplicate him. "Let thy voice sound in my ears." (Cant. 2 : 14); for it is written of him, "He will bring all things to your mind" (John 14 : 26.) But be prompt in your correspondence to the divine grace : "Delay not to be converted to the Lord and defer it not from day to day," (Ecclus. 5 : 8,) for the inspirations of the Holy Ghost know naught of slow effects. The Paraclete is compared to a mighty wind, and his inspirations in our souls are full of heavenly violence. Woe unto those who value them no more than a passing wind ! "The Spirit breatheth where it will." "To-day, if you shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts." (Ps. 94 : 8,) for the grace of conversion once despised may depart to return no more.

2. But, despite the powerful inspirations of conscience urging them to do good, it may chance that certain souls know not how to accomplish these interior suggestions without the grace of the Holy Spirit. Pray him, my beloved, to enlighten your understandings ; for, as our Lord declared, "he will teach you all things." "O the marvelous Teacher !" exclaims St. Thomas of Villanova ; "in a moment he has made of ignorant fishermen the most learned preachers !" The Catholic Church calls the Holy Ghost "the light of hearts." Those who walk in darkness know not where they are or whither they are going, but those who are enlightened by the light of the Holy Spirit know all things. "Because our earthly life is not unlike night," says St. Chrysostom, "God has given the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost." He is, according to the testimony of St. Athanasius, "none other than the light of the divine countenance, the Holy Ghost who conducts the Saints in the right road." "Come to him and be enlightened," (Ps. 33 : 6,) and you will learn what and how to do good.

3. But it is not enough to know what is good unless we do it ; for "to him, therefore, who knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (James 4 : 17.) The Holy Ghost is a fire that not only enlightens the intellect, but also inflames the will of men. He not only teaches the understanding but he strengthens the will. We have a proof of this truth in the Apostles. They were at first timid, cowardly men ; but after they had received the Holy Ghost they rushed joyfully into the midst of dangers, and braved death fearlessly for the sake of Christ, as though not formed of clay, but made of iron. "I have run—not merely *gone* but *run*—in the way of thy commandments,

when thou didst enlarge my heart," (Ps. 118: 32,) says the Psalmist. According to the testimony of St. Augustine, it is through this enlarging of the heart that love is poured into it by the Holy Ghost, a love which strengthens the faithful so powerfully that they may cry out with the Apostle, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Tribulation or distress?" I am sure that none of these can do so. We have learned the effects of the Holy Ghost in our hearts. I ask you now, my brethren, with the Apostle of the Gentiles, "Have you received the Holy Ghost?" (Acts 19: 2.) Do you feel in your hearts the pure impulses that proceed from this divine Spirit? Have you a desire to avoid evil and do good? "We exhort you that you receive not the grace of God in vain." (2 Cor. 6: 1.) The grace of God will not be wanting to you, only let you not be wanting in grace to co-operate with it, and remember that the Sacred Text declares that the Spirit of God will not dwell "in a body subject to sins"; the Holy Ghost will not enter an impure soul. Have you received the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of purity? Then "grieve not this holy Spirit," (Ephes. 4: 30,) that is, do not drive him away from you by your sins, and he will then dwell in you and you in him eternally. Amen.

B.

## WHIT-SUNDAY.

## THE TRIUMPHS OF THE CHURCH.

*"Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* (Matt. 16 : 18.)

No matter how degraded or debased human nature may become, it will always preserve the imperishable instinct of admiration for what is great or good and a keenly-felt desire of profiting thereby. The history of the world, in every generation, teaches this. And it is because men have recognized such a principle that we find them prompted at all times and in every place to commemorate the great deeds of heroes and the grand results of genius or power. Not only are these elaborated and dwelt admiringly upon, in order to urge us towards higher things, to arouse our enthusiasm, but certain days are also set aside to remind us of some grand, glorious, or wonderful event which took place thereon.

Wisely then and well, guided by the spirit of her own ineffable wisdom, does the Church carry us back through the mists of nineteen centuries to the first Pentecost—to the day when the Paraclete inflamed the hearts and the tongues of the chosen twelve, and sent them forth from the Cenacle to subdue the world. "'Go, teach all nations.' You are weak and ignorant, timid and hesitating. You are but twelve, of obscure birth and humble calling. The religion you preach is a 'stumbling-block to the Jews and a scandal to the Gentiles.' Your standard is emblematic only of an unutterable disgrace and an ignominious death. You have already incurred the hatred of the synagogue; the whole Roman Empire will soon balance itself against you. All the powers of earth and hell will league themselves for your destruction; but yet I say: 'Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' (Matt. 28 : 19.) 'For from the rising of the sun even to the going down of the same there shall be offered to me a clean oblation, and my name shall be great amongst the nations, saith the Lord of Hosts.'" (Mal. 1 : 11.)

This was the message of the Divine Spirit to the Apostles. And our Holy Mother to-day would have us contrast the Church of our times with the Church of the poor fishermen of Galilee. She would remind us of the miracles of her Apostles, the constancy of her martyrs, the sanctity and the wisdom of her Pontiffs, the wonderful spread of her doc-

trines, but, above all, the triumphs she has achieved, the indestructible vitality she has preserved in the face of unceasing hostilities since the day of her foundation, since the sun set upon her first Pentecost.

I. The vitality of the Church has convinced many an illustrious convert of the divinity of her origin. It has even won the reluctant admiration of the unbelievers, who would fain attribute it simply to purely human agencies. And reasonably so. They have seen the Church, from her birth, undergo the bitterest trials. Following in the footsteps of her Divine Spouse, she has ever shared with him the sorrows of Calvary, the glories of Tabor.

Met at the outset by the hatred of the Jews and the persecution and scorn of the Gentiles, her existence was one continued struggle against both. Later on, schism after schism amongst her own children long threatened her with dismemberment. The cunning of philosophers and the swords of legions assailed her. Political and religious revolutions sought to undermine her authority. Men of great but perverted genius endeavored by ridicule to belittle her claims. And to-day, as in the past, orators declaim, statesmen legislate, art and science unite in an unholy alliance against her. The cry of another rabble such as once thronged the prætorium of Pilate rings in her ears, "Crucify her! crucify her!"

These are no longer the dark ages (say the wiseacres), and in the light of the nineteenth century this self-styled divine Church, this oppressor, this enemy of all progress, is an eye-sore, an anachronism. But vain is all their rage. The "milk-white hind" will live on through the ages, sorely wounded, perhaps, as she has often been in the past, but with an inexhaustible supply of the divine *ichor*, of which no human weapon can drain her veins, and which insures her the glorious immortality of her Founder. "Her foundations are in the hills, and the hand of the Most High supports her." (Ps. 86.) So plainly is this evident from the history of her triumphs that those who run may read the divine charter. The past will teach us the issue of the present and the expectation of the future.

II. The Sacrifice of Calvary has been consummated. Christ has arisen from the dead, instructed his Apostles, and ascended into heaven. Ten days afterwards the Holy Ghost comes down upon the expectant Twelve; and from that hour we date the commencement of the "Kingdom of Peace." Armed only with the Word and the Symbol, those few poor men, unknown and unsupported, portioned out the world for their respective missions. And when they began in words of burning wisdom to preach the Crucified, every day saw thousands filled with the same absorbing, enthusiastic love of the Cross, and every place



penetrated by the Spirit, and re-echoing with the evidences of Christian truth. Jew and Gentile, Pagan and Infidel, humbly knelt together at the foot of the Cross, and called each other brother. Even in the palace of the Cæsars this Gospel was heard. "We are but of yesterday," says Tertullian, "and already we fill your cities and your country places. We are even in your Senate and Forum; we leave you only your temples. The vanquished have given laws to the victor!" But how fierce the struggle that preceded this triumph! As Christ had foretold so does it happen. "You shall be hated for my name's sake; you shall stand before governors and kings, and whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth a service to God." The blood-thirsty vengeance of the Jews died out only when they could no longer stone or crucify. The innumerable legions of the Roman Empire, who never before knew what defeat meant, hurled themselves in vain against the little band that followed the Nazarene. "What! must our gods disappear and give place to the prophet of a despised race? Is there no longer to be a Pantheon, a Coliseum? Must we put off the diadem of the world, and bow our heads to him whose crown was of thorns? How dare they come preaching to us of humility? We are the rulers of the earth. How dare they speak of peace, while our cohorts are waiting, more numerous than the Assyrians, and the blast of war is to them as the breath of their nostrils? To the lions with these Christians! Shall it be said that Rome cannot crush this insignificant band? A thousand times no!" And then, the sands of the arena smoked with Christian blood, and the Imperial City was illuminated with the light from the bodies of a thousand Christian martyrs, which, night after night, the cruel tyrant set up, as human torches, to blaze in the open street until consumed. Nor were these deeds confined to the Capitol. Wherever the Roman eagle spread its wings (and that was in every known land), the followers of Christ beheld the decree of their persecution; and, at last, as we are told, an address of congratulation was presented to the wearer of the purple, styling him the "New Jupiter," because "he had wiped away forever from the face of the earth the very name of Christians!"

And, indeed, it did seem as though Christ had altogether abandoned his Church, as though his prophecies and promises had all been made void. For the voice of the Christian was nowhere heard, and all the citizens of Rome once again joined in the sacred games and sacrificed to the false gods! But, beneath their very feet, hidden away from the light of the sun, conversing in whispers, and fearful of strange faces, there remained the remnant of Christians who formed what is known to us as the Church of the Catacombs. Down under the streets of Rome lived, or rather burrowed, the few faithful ones who had escaped destruction. They were but a handful, it is true, but they were the

germ of that great tree which a little later on, under the fostering care of Constantine, was to spread its branches once more to the confines of the universe. Jesus Christ was not false to his words ; he had broken none of his promises ; “sleeping, he slumbers not,” and, in his own good time, so we see, he sent his children forth once more with the banner of the cross : “*In this sign shalt thou conquer!*”

Now, of a truth, the world witnesses a sublime sight, Imperial Rome subdued by the twelve fishermen of Galilee ! “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,” saith the Lord, “and the prudence of the prudent I will reject.” (1 Cor. 1:19.) Who could have predicted such a sequel ? Rude and unlettered, they confounded the subtle philosophers. Poor and lowly, they humbled the haughty patrician. Unarmed and defenseless, they overcame the might of many legions ; and, instead of being scoffed at and ridiculed, rulers and their peoples strove to outdo each other in the respect and the homage which they offered them. For centuries after Constantine, the Church and the world enjoyed universal peace. But it was not to continue. Internal enemies had done the worst, but in vain ; and it now remained for her own unworthy children to turn the swords sharpened in her armory against her holy maternal breast. They perverted the science which she so carefully fostered, and in which she neglected no opportunity of instructing and perfecting them. Arians, Nestorians, Pelagians, Eutychians, with hosts of others, had come and gone. They did all the harm that perverted judgment, false reasoning, and pandering to human passions, could effect. None other but a divine institution—the Church of God—could have triumphed over their machinations.

III. At last came the greatest struggle of all. In the sixteenth century an apostate monk went down before the gates of Wittenberg and inaugurated what is falsely called the “*Reformation*.” Instead of *re-forming*, Luther and his followers *de-formed*. After three hundred years the traces of their crimes still disfigure the face of Europe. In some countries, the memory of that diabolical crusade will last while there is a pen or a tongue to tell thereof, as long as a stone is left of the sacred ivy-clad ruins, whose relics continually remind us that the desecrator has been busy there, and that religious fanaticism has razed to the ground the fairest and the noblest shrines ever erected by human hands to the glory of the Most High God !

War, civil and religious, raged through the whole continent. Houses were divided ; brothers furiously struck at each other from opposing ranks ; and enmities were engendered between neighboring peoples, between nation and nation, that will cease only with the extinction of both. Flagrant injustice and oppression were the characteristics of

the age. Above all others, perhaps, this was the period of the Church's Calvary.

Nor did it end there. A new development arose—the logical outcome of the reformer's or de-former's principles. A new deity was discovered. Advanced thought discarded the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and abrogated the Jehovah of Moses as antiquated and obsolete. Men worshiped the goddess "Reason"! Every man was his own God. "Away with the Church and her arrogant pretenses and her old musty traditions! Does she think we will be dictated to by her or her priests? The end has come at last."

This was the exultant cry of the children of the eldest daughter of the Church—France. And it looked as though the end had come. The tricolor floated from the battlements of St. Angelo; the Vicar of Christ was a captive in the hands of a man as unscrupulous as powerful. Another Diocletian had arisen, swearing, blaspheming, and vowing vengeance on the only man whom he could neither frighten, cajole, nor coerce. "The Pope has thwarted my designs," he cried. "I, who have beaten the combined hosts of Europe. See if I do not teach him a lesson! What do I care for his threats! Can he make the muskets drop from the hands of my soldiers?" But even while he spoke, while the sacrilegious bravado was yet upon his lips, the finger of God had drawn the limits of his career. Like another Balthasar, he was weighed in the balance and found wanting. A retreat the most disastrous in the annals of warfare, was the first signal that his course was run. The muskets actually *dropped* from the frozen grasp of his soldiers, and that magnificent army, the great host he had led triumphantly from the Rhine to the Nile, was utterly and forever destroyed. And what of himself? Alas, the exile of St. Helena was forced to make his home at last, like a caged eagle, upon a barren rock; and a few paces measured the domain of him who ruled nations but missed his destiny.

IV. As a last consideration, we may say that with our own eyes we have seen history repeat itself. The story of this century is but a continuation, a repetition, of that of the preceding one. The Church has as many enemies to-day, perhaps, as she ever had; and those enemies have striven and still strive in vain "to prevail against her." Religion may be banned from our schools, a godless power may rob and confiscate the property of the Church, a Bismarck may legislate, and an Ingersoll lecture, but, "Woe to him that buildeth up his house by injustice." (Jer. 22:13.) Greater than they have pitted themselves against the Vicar of Christ, and the world still hears many a repetition of the old Apostate's dying confession: "*Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!*"

As it has been and is, so it shall ever be. "The Catholic Church,"

says the Protestant historian, in words that we are all familiar with, and never tire of repeating, "the Catholic Church has seen the commencement of all the governments and of all the ecclesiastical institutions that now exist in the world, and we feel no assurance that she is not destined to see the end of them all. She was great and respected before the Saxon had set foot in Britain, before the Frank had crossed the Rhine, when Grecian eloquence still flourished at Antioch, when idols were still worshiped in the temple of Mecca. And she may still exist in undiminished vigor, when some traveler from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge, to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's."

Aye, even so. But we who are of her fold believe, not that she may, but that she *will*, survive all the empires of men. "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Matt. 28:20.) "Arise, O Jerusalem! Cast aside thy robes of mourning. Behold the days of abundance and joy! The children of them that afflict thee shall come bowing down to thee, and they that slandered thee shall worship the steps of thy feet." While all things else change, thou art ever unchangeable. What the Apostles taught is still thy belief; what Scribe and Pharisee assailed is even yet professed by thy children; and what the might of Pagan Rome, the malice of heretic and infidel, would destroy or pollute, flourishes to-day, "ancient, yet ever new." And the Gospel of peace and good-will that has survived all and subdued all is the same which, to-day, governs and sways the hearts of her subjects, whose numbers are as the sand of the sea-shore or the leaves of the mighty forest.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land.

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

"Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

"Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." Amen.

W. DOLLARD.

## TRINITY SUNDAY.

## THE MYSTERY OF THE HOLY TRINITY.

*“Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” (Matt 28: 19.)*

Faith teaches that God is three in persons and one in essence ; and in this faith we are all baptized. The Apostles have perfectly fulfilled the two-fold commandment given them by their divine Master : *Teach* and *Baptize* in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. This doctrine is founded on the word of God, for it is written : “There are three that give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit ; and these three are one.” (1 John 5: 7.) Baptism is grounded on the command of our Saviour ; and we are baptized in no other name than in that which gives testimony in heaven, the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost. So true the testimony is, so incomprehensible is the mystery. If you desire, however, to obtain such knowledge of this unfathomable mystery as is consistent with our finite understanding, then

I. *Believe* ; and

II. *Love*.

It is not by reason but by the will ; not through knowledge, but through virtue, and especially through the two principal virtues of faith and charity, that one can obtain an idea of this inscrutable mystery.

I. Although it is impossible for human reason

1. To *comprehend* the great mystery of the Blessed Trinity,

2. It must *believe* it.

1. “He that is a searcher of majesty shall be overwhelmed by glory.” (Prov. 25: 27.) Even the most learned and enlightened men have not been able to understand the mystery of Three Persons in One God ; and St. Paul himself exclaims : “O the depth of the riches, of the wisdom, and of the knowledge of God ! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways !” (Rom. 11 : 33.) This is a great mystery ; we must reverence it and not seek to fathom it ; for this would be presumption. The divine essence surpasses human reason. In what respect would the incomprehensible majesty of God surpass the human understanding if every thing



relating to him could be easily grasped by man? "It is no wonder," says St. Ambrose, "that man can not comprehend thy essence, O God! It would, on the contrary, be a miracle should he be able to fathom it."

2. It is true our finite reason can form no definite idea of the mysteries of God; yet it receives through faith an infallible testimony in their regard. Faith gives to reason an incontrovertible assurance of certainty, but without explaining the mysteries. "We see now through a glass and in an obscure manner," says St. Paul: "but then face to face." (Cor. 13: 12.) That which we see here below, as it were, through a dark, smoky glass, half-veiled by the mist of earth, we shall one day behold revealed in perfect splendor and unobscured glory when we stand face to face with God. Let us, then, believe, and say with St. Bernard that the Trinity of persons is not contrary to the Unity. Let us believe in the Unity of God without confounding the three divine persons. These are no empty words, but we should not seek to fathom the depths of the unfathomable. Enough for us that this is the teaching of the Church. Reason cannot comprehend it, but it is beyond the shadow of doubt; and through faith it is infallibly true. "You will perhaps ask," says St. Augustine, "how can one believe this, or how comprehend it? You ask well how can man believe it? but you do not ask rightly when you say how can he comprehend it? For, if one could comprehend it, he would no longer believe, but see. Therefore, I say to you, believe it because you can not comprehend it."

II. He who has a more profound insight into this mystery possesses it,

1. *Not through Knowledge derived from reason, but*
2. *Through Love received from the Spirit of God.*

1. "Love him, and your hearts shall be enlightened." (Ecclus. 2: 10.) In the school of heavenly wisdom, we learn not by the perusal of learned books, but by continual meditation on the divine truths. It is not erudition, but holiness, that is required for a profound knowledge of God. "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he hath not yet known as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the same is known by him." (1 Cor. 8:2.) The humble saint knows God much better than the sinner who is wise in worldly lore. Illiterate but pious souls are usually more enlightened in spiritual matters than the most erudite but tepid and slothful theologian. Our Saviour appeared after his resurrection to his disciples, and "they knew not that it was Jesus. That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved said to Peter: It is the Lord." (John 21: 7.) St. Chrysologus observes: "The first to know

him was he who loved him the most tenderly, because the eye of love is more keen and penetrating." Therefore, strive to be "rooted and founded in charity; that you may be able to comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth, that you may know also the charity of Christ which surpasseth knowledge." (Ephes. 3 : 17, 18.)

2. That this knowledge does not proceed from mere natural reason but from the divine Spirit is made clear to us by the testimony of Holy Writ. Our Saviour had instructed his disciples perfectly in the truths of faith; but the knowledge of the divine essence he withheld from them until the descent of the Holy Ghost. "I will ask the Father," these are his words, "and he shall give you another Paraclete." He immediately adds the reason for this—"In that day you shall know that I am in my Father." (John 14, 16, 20.) Later on he says mysteriously: "I have yet many things to say to you, but you can not bear them now. But when he the Spirit of Truth shall come, he will teach you all truth." (John 16: 12.) As our Saviour had foretold, it came to pass, for scarcely had the Apostles received the Holy Ghost when they began preaching the sublime doctrines of the Blessed Trinity, the Incarnation, Resurrection, etc., with such eloquence that every one marvelled. "And they were all astonished and wondered, saying one to another, What meaneth this?" (Acts. 2: 12.) O divine Spirit, grant that through thee we may know and ever firmly believe in the Father and the Son and thee, the Holy Ghost, proceeding from them both, three divine Persons in one God, perfectly distinct, yet equal in all things!

Being now well aware of the means to arrive at a knowledge of the Blessed Trinity, it only remains, my beloved, that we endeavor to image forth among ourselves that beautiful unity of the Triune God,—the sublime mystery of three persons in one divine essence. To this end our Saviour prayed to his Eternal Father at the Last Supper: "Holy Father, keep them in my name whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we also *are*." (John 17: 11.) In what consists the Unity and Trinity of God? The Unity consists in the essence and the Trinity in the persons. Dearly beloved, we are all brethren in Christ, and members of one single body! Let us manifest this unity by fraternal charity, and the plurality by reverence toward one another. Love makes us to be one body, but not to be equal members of one body; and thus besides love the servant owes reverence to his master, the inferior to the superior, the son to his father. If we are exact in the performance of these duties, we shall manifest the plurality in persons and the unity in love; and our Saviour may then justly say of us: "Those whom thou hast given me are one as we are. Holy Father! keep them!" Amen.

B.

## TRINITY SUNDAY.

## RASH JUDGMENTS.

*"Judge not, and you shall not be judged."* (Luke 6 : 37.)

Our blessed Lord once said : "By this shall all men know you for my disciples if you have love one for another"—thus declaring charity, fraternal charity, the distinguishing characteristic of all Christians. But, nowadays, could an infidel recognize a Christian by this mark ? Is not uncharitableness the prevailing sin of our age ? Can two or three people meet together without giving vent to rash judgments and suspicions, without making the failings of others the subject of their conversation ? If they would say only what is true. But the detractor always exaggerates the faults and frailties of his neighbor ; and the calumniator suspects and condemns even their most innocent actions. Rash judgment—on which I propose to speak in particular to-day—is a very prevalent sin among all sorts of men ; and we should guard ourselves carefully against it, since it is not only an offense against JUSTICE, but thereby

I. *The great law of Charity is violated ;*

II. *We assume to ourselves the office of a judge, which belongs to God alone ;*

III. *Our judgments frequently rest on delusions ;*

IV. *They are an evidence of an evil, vicious heart ;*

V. *He who judges others is himself not free from sin ;*

VI. *Such judgments are fatal to his own eternal welfare*

I. By rash judgment *the greatest law of Christianity*, namely, *the love of our neighbor*, is violated. The Apostle says : "Charity thinketh no evil." (1 Cor. 13 : 5.) What else can we think of a man but that he has no charity if he looks with an evil eye at every action of his fellow-man ? Some suspect not only the most innocent actions of others but even go so far as to represent his good as evil. If one is humble, they call him a hypocrite ; if he is retired, he is called eccentric and odd ; if he bears injuries and offences patiently, he is stigmatized as a coward ; if he is fervent in the practice of his religion, they call him a weak-minded enthusiast ; if he is frugal and economical, they accuse him of avarice ; if he gives alms generously, he is termed a spendthrift.

The Jews said that St. John had a devil, because he fasted ; and they called Christ a glutton and a drunkard, because they saw him eat and drink. In short, whatever one's neighbor may do, rash judgment finds

something to blame. But what kind of charity is this, which suspects every one and finds fault with every thing? Charity covers a multitude of sins. He that loves his neighbor sincerely, always tries to excuse his failings; but rash judgment turns even good into evil; hence it is evident that if we judge rashly, the first mark of Christianity, fraternal love, is wanting to us.

The love of God and of our neighbor is the life of the soul, as air is the life of the body. Rash judgment, like a secret poison, destroys this life. As the fish dies when cast on dry land, so the soul perishes when separated from divine and fraternal love.

II. God is our supreme *Judge*. He has most solemnly reserved for himself this sovereign prerogative. He styles himself "Judge of the living and the dead." He will suffer no rival in this great office. Therefore, if man presume to judge his brother, he invades the divine prerogative, and usurps the right and jurisdiction of him who has said: "Judgment is mine."

The Apostle says: "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth." (Rom. 14: 4.) There are three causes which, according to St. Paul, deny you the right to judge your neighbor.

1. Your own unworthiness.

Who are you? Think of your origin. You are a handful of dust which the goodness of God has animated with life; but into dust you must, at last, return. You are nothing but a reservoir into which flows all the filthiness of sin. And yet you will assume to yourself an authority over your neighbor and presume to judge him?

2. Your want of power and right.

The Apostle upbraids you with your impertinence, and tells you plainly that you are utterly unable, that you have no privilege whatever, to judge another man's servant, namely your neighbor.

3. You wrest from the Supreme Judge *his* power and right.

By the words, "To his master he standeth and falleth," St. Paul clearly shows you that God is the sovereign master of all, and that to him alone, consequently, all judgment (as well as all power to reward or punish) pre-eminently belong.

III. Furthermore, *our rash judgments are frequently based upon our delusions*. The Apostle says: "Judge not before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." (1 Cor. 4: 5.)

Herein, the Apostle warns us to abstain from judging others, because we have not the right insight into their hearts and souls. To pronounce a just judgment, one should be able to penetrate the inmost recesses of another's interior. But how can we penetrate the heart of another, when frequently we do not know what passes in our own heart? Ah, the heart of man is an inscrutable abyss, and none save the piercing eye of eternal truth and wisdom is able to search its depths. Hence he says: "I do not judge according to the book of man." (1 Kings 16: 7.) Man sees only those things that appear; hence, his judgment is often fallible. Even with the best will we frequently deceive ourselves. Our knowledge is imperfect; we are blind, short-sighted, and liable to a thousand errors even in our own concerns, and infinitely more so in those of others. Again, we generally judge the present by the past. Do you not know that your fellow-man, who committed a crime yesterday, may have done penance over night, and thus earned, to-day, a place among the children of God? Saul went to Damascus with the intention of persecuting the Christians. On his way thither he was converted. All who knew him or had heard of him—yea, even Ananias, his heaven-appointed spiritual director—held him to be an enemy of Christ, and yet, before God, he was already a vessel of election. A mere trifle sometimes suffices to turn a sinner instantaneously into a saint. The call of Jesus, "Follow me," made an apostle of Matthew; the entrance of the same divine Lord into the house of Zacchæus made an unjust man into a devout son of Abraham. If you had lived in St. Augustine's time, and had seen him plunged for thirty years in gross sins of the flesh as well as in the errors of the Manichæans, what would you have thought of his salvation? And yet, he became one of the greatest of Saints, whilst probably many of his contemporaries who condemned him, went down to hell. Therefore, if you see your brother fall into sin to-day, look on him to-morrow, as no longer a sinner, because you do not know whether he has not in the mean time repented of his sin and already obtained pardon of God. The thief on the cross became a saint in an instant; Magdalene, kneeling at the feet of Christ, was condemned by the Pharisee, although she was already justified in the sight of God. Reflect well on this; judge no one lest you judge as a sinner some saint who will, one day, surpass you in glory.

IV. Rash judgment betrays the evil, vicious heart of the man who judges. To him who is affected with the jaundice, every thing appears yellow; and he who always thinks and speaks ill of his neighbor cannot be good. A man addicted to a vicious habit has a strange propensity to suspect others of the same. The profligate imagines every man as lustful as himself; even in innocent actions he fancies he



detects the traces of his own foul passion. Suetonius mentions that the bestial Nero could not be persuaded that other men were more chaste than himself; he alleged that all such were hypocrites, who committed the grossest crimes in secret. Thus the ambitious, the covetous, the revengeful measure the hearts and actions of others by their own. If, therefore, you can say nothing good of your neighbor you only show the malice of your own heart, and set the seal to your own condemnation. I shall illustrate this by a few examples out of the Bible: When the Egyptian Joseph ordered his brothers to be brought before him, they, being much afraid, said: "We are brought in, that he may bring upon us a false accusation and by violence make slaves of us." (Gen. 43: 8.) What reason had they to suspect such cruel treatment at the hands of Joseph, who ruled over Egypt not as a tyrant but as a father? They had no reason; but they judged him by their own wicked hearts. They had acted falsely in the past, and having sold their little brother as a slave they now supposed him to be capable of a like falsehood and treachery. When Dives, from the abyss of hell, beheld Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, he asked no favor of the former beggar, but rather of father Abraham; because he feared that Lazarus would now be as hard-hearted towards him as he had formerly been towards Lazarus. Again, when Cain had slain his brother Abel, he judged his parents, Adam and Eve, capable of the same crime, saying in his despair: "Every one that findeth me shall kill me." (Gen. 4: 14.) Learn from this to be ashamed of judging your neighbor rashly; and refrain from uncharitable thoughts lest thereby you only discover the more the viciousness of your own heart.

V. It is not becoming us to judge our fellow-men, *because we ourselves are weak and frail*. Jesus asks: "Can the blind lead the blind? Do they not both fall into the ditch?" It certainly would be ridiculous to hear one blind man say to another: "Come, I will show you the road." Since he sees not the ditch, he can scarcely avoid falling into it, and drawing the other after him. The same is our case if we judge others. Being full of sins and vices, how can we show the way of virtue to others? We are curious in prying into the faults of others, but slow in correcting our own. Hence, these words of an ancient hermit are true: "*Men carry their own sins in a wallet behind their backs, but keep those of others before them, always under their eyes.*" Let us turn the wallet, and, carrying our own failings always under our eyes, strive earnestly to correct them. As long as we ourselves are defiled by great sins, we should be blind to the frailties of others; whence Jesus says: "How canst thou say to thy brother: Brother, let me pull the mote out of thy eye, when thy thyself seest not the beam in thy own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast first the beam out of thy own eye;

and then shalt thou see clearly to take out the mote from thy brother's eye." Amend first your own life, after that you may labor to convert your brother.

VI. Lastly, we ought to abstain from rash judgment *for the sake of our own salvation*. Jesus says : " Judge not, and you shall not be judged. With the same measure that you shall measure, it shall be measured to you again ; with the same judgment that you shall judge, you shall be judged again. You, therefore, ruin yourselves, if you proceed against others with such uncharitableness. As you do to your brother in time, so God will do to you in eternity. Judgment without mercy shall be the portion of those who have not shown mercy. We all stand in need of the divine mercy ; what then will become of us if God deal with us according to the rigor of his justice ? If the just tremble at the thought of the day of judgment and with fear and trembling appear before God, where shall the sinner and the wicked appear ? What will become of them ? Will you then be so foolish as to increase the measure of your sins by rash judgment ; to renounce the mercy of God and to provoke his justice against you ? God has told us he will forgive us if we forgive others, and that we love him if we love our neighbor, and that he will consider every thing we do to our neighbor, done to himself. Ought we not then for our own sake think well of our brother, and refrain from judging him rashly ? Ought we not excuse his failings, and cover them with the mantle of charity ? Ah ! yes, my beloved, let us abstain from rashly judging any man. Let us become lovingly blind to the failings of others, if we would not discover that we are infected with a like disorder. Let each begin the reform in his own heart ; and if, thanks to the divine mercy, we are free from the evil which we cannot help discerning in our neighbor, let us humble ourselves, and believe that we offend perhaps in other and worse things. Even though our conscience be free from all blame, let us not cease to bewail and to lament human frailty, assuring ourselves that if the greatest sinner in the world had had the abundant graces which God bestowed upon us he would have made a better use of them than we, and would now be a great saint. Let us ponder all this, and all hardness and uncharitableness in judging our fellow-men will disappear forever.

A. W. O. S. B.

## CORPUS CHRISTI.

## THE UNION OF GOD WITH MAN.

*“He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him.”* (John 6 : 57.)

To-day's Gospel informs us of the object and effects of the Last Supper. Our Saviour gives us his Body to eat and his Blood to drink, for no other purpose than that he may be united to us and we to him. This is one of the most sublime mysteries of our faith ; and we are not capable of sufficiently extolling the dignity of this Holy Sacrament, nor of returning adequate thanks to our divine Lord for bestowing it upon us. Our redemption on the cross did not satisfy his generous Heart; he wished to give us a perpetual memorial thereof in the holy Sacrament of the Altar. I shall, to-day, explain to you its object and effects and will show you in this sacred banquet,

I. *How God is united with man ;* and

II. *How man is united with God.*

I. That God might be united with us, he instituted this divine Sacrament, and in this, he has revealed

1. His Omnipotence,
2. His Wisdom, and
3. His Love.

1. Our creation was the work of God's power. The Incarnation was the work of his Love ; but the institution of this sacred banquet is the work of both. “Omnipotent as God is,” says St. Augustine, “he could give us nothing more than himself.” The mystery of Transubstantiation rests upon the omnipotence of God ; for if God were not omnipotent this change would be impossible. But that it is an entire change, the Catholic Church teaches ; and proves this dogma from the Sacred Scriptures, from the Holy Fathers, and from uninterrupted tradition. Holy Writ repeats to us the words of institution : “This is my body which is given for you.” (Luke 22 : 19.) “This bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.” (John 6 : 52.) “My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.” (John 6 : 56.) I can not see how our Saviour's meaning could be plainer or clearer. That the doctrine of Transubstantiation has always been believed in the Church, is confirmed by the undeniable

testimony of the Holy Fathers, handed down from century to century. We are not able to comprehend this mystery. We must grant that God could do something which we can not comprehend.

2. That we can not see God in his divine Essence whilst we are in this life is an incontrovertible truth. Moses prayed, "Show me thy glory," but he received this answer, "Thou canst not see my face, for man shall not see me and live." (Exod. 33 : 20.) Daniel saw only the vision of an angel, and he acknowledged "No strength remained in me, and I became weak." (Dan. 10 : 18.) The Israelites prayed the Lord not to speak to them in person, or they would immediately die. Divine wisdom devised a means by which God could unite himself with man without, at the same time, destroying man's life by his splendor and glory. He conceals himself under the form of bread, and this form is to the New Dispensation what the veil of the temple was to the Old. It is, as it were, the wall of which the Spouse in the Canticles sings, "Behold ! he standeth behind our wall, looking through the windows, looking through the lattices." (Cant. 2 : 9.) Divine Wisdom also chose this means, that death might be driven from the world, in the same manner as it entered it. And lastly, that the union of God with man might become perfect, he makes choice of an inexpensive article of food, which is most easy of preparation, and in general use throughout the world.

3. How could our blessed Saviour have given a stronger proof of his love than in this mysterious banquet ? As he created and redeemed us through love, so has he instituted, through love, this sacred banquet as a token that "his delight is to be with the children of men," and to dwell with them eternally. It is true, he said prior to his departure from earth, "I go to him that sent me" (John 7 : 33) ; but after the institution of this holy Sacrament he also said, "Behold, I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world." (Matt. 28 : 20.) Can there be a greater love than this, "that a man lay down his life for his friends?" (John 15 : 13.) This love is great, it is faithful, it is steadfast, and as love is always intent upon uniting itself with its beloved one, so this union is most perfect ; because he not only draws us towards, but into himself ; not only will abide with us, but in us. Omnipotent, wise, and amiable God ! "What is man that thou shouldst magnify him ? or why dost thou set thy heart upon him ?" (Job 7 : 16.)

II. After having considered the object of the institution of this great Sacrament, let us now study *its effects*. It unites man with God most perfectly—

1. Through grace,
2. Through the strength which it imparts, and
3. Through the complete change which it works in the soul.

1. Grace is able to soften and humanize the stoniest of hearts. "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh." (Ezech. 36 : 26.) When this transformation takes place, all the old inclinations to evil are banished from the soul, and man receives, as it were, a new heart, a new tongue, and new hands, so that he no longer thinks, speaks, or works in an earthly manner. "Thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's." (Ps. 102 : 5.) You have begun to be one of the eagles of God, for you aspire after heaven and have a disgust for earthly things. God's eagles always remain near the altar, for "where the body is, there shall the eagles be gathered together." "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ !" (Rom. 13 : 14) says the Apostle. This cannot be done except by grace, which is alone able to render the soul conformable to God, and to unite it with him ; for thereby it receives the robe of salvation and of righteousness, "the gilded clothing surrounded with variety." Thus arrayed, the soul may appear with confidence before its spouse, and be united to him. Without grace, the soul is dead ; but through this holy Sacrament it awakes to eternal life, as our Saviour himself has testified : "If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever !" (John 6 : 52.)

2. Human favors are unstable and fleeting. "They are clouds without water which are carried about by winds." (Jude 1 : 12.) But divine grace is unchangeable ; and, if man so wills it—eternal. Our Saviour himself has said, "He abideth in me and I in him." (John 6 : 57.) The grace of God has such power that the true Christian can say with the Apostle, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ?" (Rom. 8 : 35.) It procures for him the greatest security and an impregnable wall against his enemies. "The enemy is beaten down if he sees the lips crimsoned with the blood of Christ," says St. Chrysostom. "Thou hast prepared a table before me, against them that afflict me." (Ps. 22 : 5.) This table is none other than that of the Lord, which will satisfy every want of the heart of man ; it will make him prosper spiritually, and attain in the end to eternal life. "He that eateth my flesh, hath everlasting life." (John 6 : 55.)

3. We need not wonder that there is no death for the soul that is entirely united with God, and, as it were, changed into him. "He hath indeed, given us very great and precious promises, that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature." (2 Pet. 1 : 4.) "Behold



what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be named and should be the Sons of God." (1 John 3 : 1.) For by grace man is not merely adopted as the child of God, but he is "born of God." (John 1 : 13.) As two pieces of wax become one when melted together, so the Bride and her Spouse become one, and the worthy communicant is one spirit with Christ. It was not enough for him to become man, but he becomes one flesh with every one who properly receives him in the holy Communion. Not merely according to faith, but in reality, we are one body with Christ ; so that every Christian may say after this change takes place, " I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. 2 : 20.) Our blessed Lord exclaims to us from the holy Sacrament, by the mouth of St. Augustine, " I am the food of the strong ; thou shalt eat me, but thou wilt not change me into thee, as is the case with earthly food, but thou shalt be changed into me." Now, as we participate by grace in the nature of this Sacrament which, according to its substance, is God himself, so we may justly be called gods as often as we receive worthily this sacred food, and are thereby changed, as it were, into God himself.

You have now heard how the union of God with man and man with God takes place in this sacred banquet. But are you worthy of this union ? Your hearts must be humble, devout, recollected, and free from sin if you desire to be united with the Divinity. Humility should raise you to a state of grace ; devotion is a necessary part of the preparation ; purity is a requisite condition without which one would eat judgment and death to himself, instead of life and grace. A priest is obliged to appear at the service of the altar in white robes, and a Christian should also have a clear conscience, if he would approach the Lord's table. Alas ! many Christians come to church in spotless clothing, but are not at all concerned about the stained and filthy state of their consciences. Would you, my Christian friends, show due reverence to the feast of Corpus Christi ? Know, then, that it is not by partaking of the holy Communion in a snow-white robe, but with a pure soul, that you evince your respect ! Go forward, then, with an humble, devout, and pure heart—and you shall hear the voice of your guardian angel exclaiming : " Well done ! my child, you are worthy, as far as is possible for human weakness, that God should be perfectly united with you and you with God ! " Amen.

B.

## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## THE LORD'S SUPPER.

*"A certain man made a great supper and invited many. And he sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were invited that they should come, for now all things were ready. And they began all at once to make excuse." (Luke 14: 16.)*

"It came to pass," says the Evangelist St. Luke, "that Jesus went into the house of a certain prince of the Pharisees on the Sabbath day to eat bread." (Luke 14: 1.) This Pharisee had invited our divine Lord, not so much to do him honor, as to observe his actions more closely and critically; "for," as St. Luke adds, "they were watching him. (Luke 14: 1.) After our Saviour had eaten supper, he began to relate a parable of another and more mysterious supper; and as he had been refreshed bodily by the Pharisee, he now wished in return to nourish the soul of his entertainer. The feast of which our Lord spoke in parable was that of the most holy Sacrament of the Altar, to which he invites all mankind, saying: "Take and eat." (1 Cor. 11: 24.) But, alas! how many excuse themselves! I shall, to-day, endeavor to prove to you that these excuses are for the most part

- I. *Vain and idle*, or
- II. *Sinful*.

I. Many excuse themselves under the pretense that it is not the will of God that every one should approach frequently to the table of the Lord. This excuse is vain; for God invites

1. *Us all*, and
2. *At all times*.

1. God invites all Christians to the holy Communion, without distinction of person or condition. In this, the king has no more privileges than his subject; the nobleman than the peasant; the millionaire than the beggar. "In thy sweetness, O God, thou hast provided nourishment for the poor," (Ps. 67: 11,) says the Psalmist. As all without exception have been redeemed, so all without any distinction are invited to this feast, which is a remembrance and pledge of our redemption. "Come to me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." (Matt. 11: 28.) "Come, eat my bread and drink the wine which I have mingled for you." (Prov. 9: 5.) The



poor and the oppressed, the blind and the lame, are not excluded from the heavenly Feast, as we see in to-day's Gospel.

2. Our Lord invites us to the holy Communion, without any limitation as to time. He promised us : "I will set my tabernacle in the midst of you." (Levit. 26: 11.) Why *in the midst of us* ? So that we might come to him at all hours and at every moment. "I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world." Not for a few years, months, or days, but unto the end of time. For eighteen hundred years this daily miracle has continued. As often as the priest in the divine Sacrifice pronounces the sacred words, our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, appears upon our altars, veiled under the sacred species of bread and wine ! O inexpressible bounty ! During all these years, not a single day has elapsed without his giving himself to many thousands under the form of bread. It is principally for this heavenly bread that we pray when we say : "Give us this day our daily bread." (Luke 11: 13.) But if this is *daily* bread why do you receive it only once a year ? Receive daily that which you need daily ; or, at least, live so that you may be worthy to receive daily.

II. Another excuse for infrequent communion is given in these words, which we so frequently hear : "I am not worthy to receive so often this sacred food ! " "I cannot prepare myself sufficiently to be worthy of approaching this sublime mystery." This excuse is worse than vain : it is in most cases sinful, arising, as it does, from a tepid rather than an humble heart. Preparation for holy Communion (such persons must understand) is twofold :

1. *Remote*, and
2. *Immediate*.

1. Remote preparation consists in leading a pure life, free from sin. "He who is not worthy to receive daily is not worthy to receive at the end of a year," says St. Augustine. "The Jews went up to Jerusalem, before the Pasch, to purify themselves." (John 11: 55.) The Pasch, or Paschal Lamb, was a type of the holy Sacrament of the Altar ; and we Christians are, without doubt, much more obliged to receive the holy Communion with clean hearts than the Jews were to purify themselves before partaking of its imperfect figure. But in what does this purity of heart consist ? That we avoid evil and do good. Are we not, apart from the reception of the holy Eucharist, obliged, as Christians, to do this at all times ? "Wherefore, thou art inexcusable, O man !" (Rom. 9: 1.) Yes, my beloved brethren, the keeping of the commandments, the practice of Christian virtues, the exact fulfilment of the duties of our state of life—these are the remote

preparation for holy Communion. As we are obliged to live according to the precepts of Christianity, so we are obliged to be daily ready to communicate spiritually, even if we do not actually receive our Lord sacramentally every day.

2. Immediate preparation consists in true devotion, in burning zeal and longing desire to receive our Saviour, in practising various virtues before, during, and after holy Communion. If we are conscious of any serious sin, we must purify our consciences by a contrite confession. As bodily food injures a sick man more than it benefits him, so the reception of this heavenly Food by a sinful soul will damage rather than nourish it. We know all this only too well, and hence some slothful souls try to excuse themselves: "I can not come; I have bought a farm; I have bought five yoke of oxen; I have married a wife; I am oppressed with household affairs; I have no time." No, beloved Christians, examine your consciences. It is your negligence, your tepidity, that keeps you back. Your lame objections do not excuse you before God; they are sinful in his sight and most hurtful to your immortal soul.

Hereafter, let us approach more frequently than in the past, and with true devotion, the table of the Lord. There are no obstacles that should lawfully deter a Christian. God invites us, and we should rejoice in the possession of this great privilege. No one can truly excuse himself and say: "I can not come." Certainly, each one must confess with the centurion of the Gospel, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof." But who would ever be worthy of receiving Christ in this mystery, says St. Ambrose, if thou, O Almighty God, didst not make him worthy? God wills it and we can do it! Enough! If these two considerations do not touch your heart, my beloved, be warned at least by the impressive threat addressed by our Lord to those who excused themselves from the banquet on various trifling pretexts: "I say to you that none of these men that were called shall taste my supper," that is (according to the interpretation of the holy Fathers), they shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

B.

## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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THE BLESSED EUCHARIST, THE GREATEST OF ALL MIRACLES.

*"He hath made a remembrance of his wonderful works, being a merciful and gracious Lord; he hath given food to them that fear him."*  
(Ps. 110 : 4.)

Thus sang the royal Psalmist with the voice of inspiration, when he pondered upon the manna wherewith the Lord had fed his people in the desert, a portion of which was preserved as a perpetual memorial in the Ark of the Covenant. In the excess of his love, wisdom, and omnipotence, our Lord Jesus Christ has, also, made a remembrance of his wonderful works. In the tabernacles of our altars, in the Christian's Ark of the Covenant, the real manna, the true Bread of heaven, is ever preserved. All the acts of an infinite God are wonderful and mysterious. Each one of his works, being a divine manifestation, bears the stamp of the mysterious and the incomprehensible. But the Blessed Sacrament is the greatest of all the miracles that our Lord wrought upon earth.

The little, fragile, unpretentious Host which we adore upon our altars outvies the very stars of heaven in their infinity and splendor; it outweighs the whole universe, filled though it be with the wonders of the Almighty. Not only one miracle, but a whole chain of miracles envelop it like the crystal, and encompass it like the gold and precious stones of the Remonstrance. "Manhu, what is it?" exclaimed the people of Israel in joyful surprise when the manna fell like snowflakes from the heavens. "Manhu, what is it?" we may likewise exclaim, when we gaze upon our Bread from heaven, and meditate on the three wonders manifested in that miraculous food:

- I. *The Love;*
- II. *The Wisdom;* and
- III. *The Omnipotence of God.*

I. In this adorable Sacrament two golden chains of divine love unite. One extends from heaven to earth; the other ascends from earth to heaven.

1. The first is *the longing of man for God.*

a. Every human heart longs for its God as the child yearns for its mother. This is a divine craving of our nature which nothing can satisfy but God alone. It is not fanaticism or enthusiasm (as the un-

believer would have us think), but the necessary consequence of our rational nature, created after the likeness of God, the true destiny of a man born to walk erect, with eyes fixed upon heaven. Neither (by the divine appointment and excess of love) can we be satisfied with a merely spiritual union, the espousals, as it were, of prayer and meditation. Man longs for a *real* and, as far as possible, a *sensible communication with God*, such as alone fully satisfies a creature formed of soul and body. He thirsts to behold his God with his eyes, to grasp him with his hands, to receive him into his bosom. Perfect love is not contented with the mere sight and admiration of its object; it longs to possess it. The highest degree of love consists in close union with the beloved one.

*b.* Even the false religions of earth have always expressed this longing of the human heart after God. They endeavored to come in close contact and communication with their deities. They built temples and altars, or consecrated to them sacred groves and holy places, inviting them to dwell therein. They offered sacrifice, and partook of the sacrificial food in order to be united with them. The sacrifice of the Jews, as well as those of the pagans, with all their attendant debauchery and vice, had no other object than to unite themselves to their invisible gods.

## 2. *The longing of God for man.*

*a.* The second great chain of love stretches from heaven to earth. God desires to possess the hearts of his creatures, his incomprehensible longing is expressed by the mouth of the prophet: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee." (Jer. 31: 3.) "My delights are to be with the children of men." (Prov. 8: 31.) Out of love for us, he has made the world. For man, the sun, moon, and stars shine, and the rippling water flows. For him, the privileged Son of the Eternal King, trees blossom, birds sing, all creatures hasten to give their service. Moreover, God's love has engraved on our souls his own divine image, so that, beholding his own likeness in us, as in a mirror, he could not help but be enamoured with the reflection of his own loveliness.

*b.* This love it was which, in the fullness of time, made the Son of God descend upon earth, and, by a divine alchemy, bring good even out of the evil. In the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, the chains of divine and human love met, and were united. Humanity could look upon its God with loving eyes; it could hear him with its ears, touch him with its hands, and speak to him as man with man. "The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us." (John 1: 14.)

3. But this was not enough for the excess of divine mercy. The

longing of each individual soul for its God, as well as the desires of mankind in general, must be satisfied and satiated in the most perfect manner. And how could this be done? By the institution of the most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, the greatest of all God's miracles of love! Jesus Christ hides himself under the species of bread and wine, in order to remain continually with us, and unite himself with us. Every one may approach, receive, and enjoy his God. Our Saviour permits himself to be eaten in this banquet of love in order to change us into himself, to appease his intense love for us, and to communicate to us all his riches.

The chains of love, springing from the Heart of God and from the soul of man, meet in the Sacred Host upon our altars, and are linked together in the closest and most intimate union. In the humble little Host, heaven and earth celebrate their espousals! But what makes this marvel of love still greater is the consideration of our Lord's profound humility whereby he has made this miracle possible. Under the commonest elements of food and drink, he veils his majesty and splendor, that, far from trembling or flying from before his face (as Israel once did), man may approach him with childlike confidence. And this miracle will cease only with time. As a continual, an eternal memorial of his love, Jesus Christ dwells as a hidden God upon our altars, giving "food to them that fear him."

II. If you were to ask a well-meaning pagan to guess the means whereby our Saviour, in his ardent love for men, had managed to hide his continual presence amongst us, what object would he name as most likely to have been chosen as the veil of the Godhead? Would it not be something of gold or silver, some precious jewel, or some rare and costly fruit? "Surely," he would say, "it must be some noble and valuable object, under which the Divinity would choose to hide himself!" Listen to the word of truth: "He took bread, blessed it and gave it to his disciples, saying, take ye and eat, this is my body! And having taken the chalice, giving thanks, he gave it to them; and they all drank of it." (Mark 14: 22, 23.) He chose bread and wine, for the species of his greatest Sacrament, his most stupendous miracle of love.

1. *Admire herein his wisdom!* Bread and wine are the most ordinary elements of our nourishment, and as such he chose them, because only through them could he unite himself to and make himself one substance with man.

a. *Bread* is to be found everywhere; it is eaten by human beings of every age and every state of life. It is called, indeed, "the staff of life." It is so palatable that it gives place to no other kind of nourish-



ment ; yet, at the same time, it may be eaten with all other articles of food. Almighty God would never have chosen for this Sacrament a costly, rare kind of food, peculiar only to certain regions. It would have been foreign to his love and mercy to make that divine food of the soul a something hard to procure, and hence inaccessible to his best-beloved servants, the poor. The designs of God in his holy Sacrament would have been thereby jeopardized, if not frustrated altogether.

b. Wine is the generous and life-giving blood of the vine, and on that account specially worthy of being changed into the blood of Jesus Christ. It is the supplement to bread ; and our Lord not only chose to remain with us and renew on our altars the bloody sacrifice of Calvary under the species of bread and wine, because he is a "priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech" (Ps. 109: 5), who, as Holy Writ tells us, offered only bread and wine in sacrifice to the Most High but, also, because two elements are necessary for the sacrifice of the Mass, since the death of the Lord is daily represented and renewed by the separation of the sacred species through the sword of the word.

2. Admire still more the wisdom of God in his choice of bread and wine. Bread is (as we have said) the staff of life ; he who eats of it supplies the waste and weakness of the vital power. It is the strength and support of life, and is changed into our flesh and blood. Wine is a strengthening beverage, "cheering the heart of man" (Ps. 103: 15), and dispelling sadness, anxiety, and fear. It inspires the one who drinks it with courage and confidence, and animates his whole being to greater activity. Are not these the grand and holy effects produced in our souls by a worthy reception of this Sacrament? The sacred Body of our Lord supports and invigorates our spiritual life, and is a remedy for all its various diseases. It does away with all weakness and cowardice in the practice of good, or the warfare against evil ; and thereby we are united most intimately with Jesus Christ. The Body of Christ is not changed into our substance, but we are changed into him, and, as it were, *deified* !

3. No sooner has the priest spoken over the bread and wine the sacred words of institution, than the great God of heaven and earth, our Saviour Jesus Christ, leaves his throne in heaven and, surrounded by Angels and Saints, descends upon the altar. The bread is no longer bread ; the wine is no longer wine ; the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ.

4. And yet, the forms and appearances of bread and wine, their taste, color, and smell, remain the same after Transubstantiation as

before, although the substance is changed into his Body and Blood. Again : although the priest break the form of bread, and separate it into innumerable particles, the interior essence remains unbroken and undivided. In each, even in the smallest particle, our Saviour, whole and entire, is received and adored. As a mirror, if broken into a thousand pieces, represents always the entire image of him who looks therein, so, in the smallest part of the Host, the body of Jesus Christ, whole and entire, is contained. Our Saviour is wholly and entirely present under both forms ! In the bread as well as in the wine, we receive his precious blood, and in the wine, as well as in the bread, his sacred flesh.

Though millions of communicants receive the body of Jesus Christ, at the same time as yourself, all receive with you the entire body of Jesus Christ ; the substance of this mysterious food is not diminished nor consumed, no matter how many eat of it. This is of all miracles the most miraculous, " he gives himself to us, and still is not less himself ; we feed upon him, and he, nevertheless, remains whole and entire."

God might create at any moment a new heaven and a new earth, a thousand times more beautiful and glorious than the present, but he can never work a greater miracle than this mystery. This is the crowning work of *his omnipotence*. Out of the sublime and sacred silence in which our Saviour sits enthroned on the altar he proclaims loudly and most solemnly how omnipotent and glorious he is ! Even the miracle of the Incarnation, which was accomplished in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, is obscured by this miracle of the Love, Wisdom, and Omnipotence of God.

Should we have any doubt as to the possibility of such a miracle ? " This change," says St. Ambrose, " should not appear impossible to us ; for the same God who, at the creation, could make all things out of nothing can certainly much more easily change that which already exists into something else." Herein, God hath outdone himself. All that is great in heaven and earth is contained in this mystery. Heaven could not give any thing, and earth could not receive any thing greater. The wisdom of God could not invent, his omnipotence could not produce, or his liberality bestow, any thing greater, better, or more holy than himself.

Let us live in the adoration of this memorial of the wonders of Jesus Christ, and in the worthy reception of this miraculous food, until, one day, the earthly veil being removed, we shall sit at the nuptial feast of the Lamb in eternal communion with Jesus Christ, who in this holy Sacrament has lovingly commenced upon earth our happy union with himself ! Amen.

BISHOP EHRLER.



## THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## RASH JUDGMENTS.

*"The Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying: This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."* (Luke 15 : 2.)

Our loving Saviour, in order to attract souls to himself, was affable to all. His doctrines were sweet and powerful ; their sweetness drew even the most hardened sinners to his feet ; whilst their power moved them to amend their lives. This was his only object in holding intercourse with sinners. But the Pharisees judged quite otherwise. They argued thus : He associates with sinners ; consequently, he is a sinner himself. Rash, wicked conclusion ! We are all shocked at this wicked, blasphemous temerity of the Pharisees, yet we fail to see that we ourselves imitate their censorious example. I will, to-day, point out to you, my dear friends, that we are never justified in judging our neighbor, since we have,

I. *No right*, and

II. *No insight into his motives.*

I. We have no right to judge others,

1. Because we are sinners ourselves and faulty men ;
2. Because to God alone belongs the right of judgment.

1. St Anthony says the reason why we judge our neighbors so hastily is because, being conscious of our own wickedness, we are ever ready to suspect others of the same. O blind man ! "thou art inexcusable, whosoever thou art that judgest." (Rom. 2 : 2.) "A fool when he walketh in the way, whereas he himself is a fool, esteemeth all men fools." (Ecclus. 10 : 3.) It generally happens that those who judge harshly of other people's faults, have far more defects themselves. "Why seest thou the mote in thy brother's eye : but the beam that is in thy own eye thou considerest not ?" (Luke 6 : 41.) Therefore this is called rash judgment because, passing over your own sins, you rashly take upon yourself to judge those of others.

2. This reminds us of what St. Paul said to the Romans : "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant ?" Your neighbor is not your subject, but your brother. "Why dost thou judge thy brother ?

or why dost thou despise thy brother?" (Rom. 14 : 10.) How can any one judge before this judgment-seat, who is yet even a servant, and not a judge himself? "I am not conscious to myself of any thing: yet in this I am not justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge not before the time: until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." (1 Cor. 4 : 5.) How dare you usurp a right which belongs to God alone? "If you would be a judge, judge yourself," says St. Chrysostom.

II. We have *no insight into our neighbor's secret motives*; for

1. Outward circumstances may deceive us; and
2. The interior of others is entirely hidden from us.

1. "Charity thinketh no evil" (1 Cor. 13 : 6); but because we are far removed from primitive Christian charity, we think evil of our neighbor, even when we do not see any thing bad in him. The sinner would rather blame and judge others than try to improve himself. Hence, the wicked heart condemns as sin, that which has only the appearance of sin. And how often do we not deceive ourselves? St. John inculcates this doctrine most impressively: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge a just judgment." (John, 7 : 24.) As it is very difficult to judge a just judgment it is better not to judge at all, than to judge rashly. Sarah was regarded as the sister of Abraham; Susannah was unjustly suspected on circumstantial evidence; judged according to human standards, the mystery of the Incarnation led to suspicions of the virtue of the Immaculate Virgin. When the Apostles began to speak in various tongues, they were considered to be under the influence of wine. Is not all this sufficient evidence to prove how easily we may judge rashly of others, if we draw our conclusions from external appearances which are seldom clearly known or understood?

2. We can judge still less of the motives which direct the actions of others. "God alone is the searcher of hearts and reins." (Ps. 7 : 10.) "He shall not judge according to the sight of the eyes, nor reprove according to the hearing of the ears, but he shall judge the poor with justice." (Is. 11 : 34.) As man can not read the thoughts and sentiments of his neighbor, he is not infallible in his judgments. "The sons of men," says the Psalmist, "are liars in the balances," that is, in their opinions. (Ps. 61 : 10.) We see this exemplified in to-day's Gospel. Our Saviour's intercourse with sinners appears outwardly censurable to his enemies; but the interior intention of Christ

was always pure and holy. How often we have erred in our past judgments ! How often have we not considered as evil in others that which was in reality good ! Therefore, "judge not, before the time that the Lord shall come who will bring darkness to light and reveal the secrets of hearts."

Yes, we are convinced, my brethren, of the evil of rash judgments, and according to the knowledge of this truth, we must for the future regulate our lives. "Of course men can see what takes place," says St. Augustine, "but we do not know the cause or motive for its occurrence ; thence arises suspicion within us." I can give you no better advice than that of St. Bernard : "Do not pry inquisitively into what your neighbor does, nor judge him rashly." Even if you discover seeming faults, judge not, but, on the other hand, try to excuse him. Excuse the motive, even if you can not excuse the act. Try to imagine that any failure of duty on the part of others is the result of ignorance, imprudence, accident or surprise. If you can not palliate the matter at all, then conclude that the temptation must have been too strong for him. Say to yourself : What might I not have done, if exposed to equally violent temptations ?

B.

## THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## THE MERCY OF GOD.

*"Thy mercy is great above the heavens ; and thy truth even unto the clouds." (Ps. 107 : 5.)*

The leading idea of to-day's Gospel is the boundless mercy of God towards sinful man. The parable of the Good Shepherd who, leaving the ninety-nine sheep in the desert, goes after the one that was lost, and never rests until he found it, and carried it back to the fold on his shoulders ; and that other parable of the woman who, having lost a piece of money, lights a candle and sweeps the whole house, and when she has found it calls in her neighbors and friends to rejoice with her—what else do they illustrate but the words of the Lord : "The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." (Matt. 18 : 11.)

In order that we may joyfully hear and willingly follow the voice of the Good Shepherd, who wanders through the desert of this world, seeking the lost sheep in order to carry it back to the fold, I will to-day endeavor to portray to you the infinite mercy of God towards sinners as depicted :

- I. *In the Old ; and*
- II. *In the New Testament.*

I When we ponder upon the horrible essence of sin, when we consider the outrage, the disobedience and ingratitude contained therein ; how we, miserable creatures that we are, dare to rebel against the Lord of heaven and earth, is it not the greatest proof of his mercy that he does not snatch away every man immediately after his first sin and consign him to condign punishment ? Is it not a proof of his mercy that he suffers us to live before his face after having outraged him by sin ? Nor is this all. God, who does "not desire the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his evil way and live" (Ezech. 33 : 11), graciously receives the greatest sinner, and most mercifully pardons him, not once, but again and again.

1. If man continues in his sins, and, as it were, rouses the anger of God by repeated insults, what does that merciful Father do ? Does he pour out the vials of wrath upon his guilty creature ? By no means ; on the contrary, listen to the sighs and lamentations which he pours forth over those sinful children who have offended him, and whom he

has every right to punish : “ O my people, what have I done to thee or in what have I molested thee ? ” (Mich. 6 : 3.) “ Is this the return thou makest to the Lord, O foolish and senseless people ? Is he not thy Father that hath possessed thee, and made thee, and created thee ? Remember the days of old ; think of every generation ; ask thy Father and he will declare to thee, thy elders, and they will tell thee, I found thee in a desert land, in a place of horror and of waste wilderness. I led thee about and taught thee, and kept thee as the apple of my eye. As the eagle enticing her young to fly and hovering over them, I spread my wings and have taken thee and carried thee on my shoulders.” (Deut. 32 : 6-10.) “ Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this ; and ye gates thereof be very desolate,” saith the Lord. “ For my people have done two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” (Jer. 2 : 12, 13.) “ Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken. I have brought up children and exalted them, but they have despised me.”

2. Who, then, is he who utters these bitter and woeful complaints ? And who are they who give rise to them ? It is God himself, the infinite Majesty of heaven and earth, who thus laments ; and it is ungrateful man of whom he complains ; disobedient children who have grievously offended their Father ; insolent servants who have rebelled against their Lord. Truly, the mercy of God is above the heavens, and his truth even unto the clouds. Why should God trouble himself about sinful man ? If we were all eternally lost he would still be the infinitely happy and great God, and yet he is so full of mercy towards us. Nor is that infinite mercy satisfied with mere empty words. The Old Testament is filled with beautiful and wonderful facts of which I shall adduce only a few.

*a. Our first parents* had committed a great sin, and done evil before the face of God. They had been endowed with great supernatural gifts of soul and body ; they well knew the divine command and the punishment which awaited them if they violated it ; neither were they impelled to evil by the concupiscence of the flesh or a perverted will. Scarcely had they transgressed the command than they understood the greatness of their iniquity and the depth of their fall ; they trembled and hid themselves from God. The Lord comes down from heaven into the Garden of Eden in order to punish the two criminals according to his justice. But he does not descend in his wrath ; he does not come enveloped in thunder-clouds to destroy them ; he approaches them gently and mildly. He calls Adam ; he seeks to learn his guilt from his own mouth. Gently and mildly he asks Adam as well as Eve : “ Why hast thou done this ? ” (Gen. 3 : 13.)

The Lord punishes sin because he is just, and he would not love, if he did not punish. (St. Augustine.) He did not punish in anger and passion, but in mercy and love, in order to satisfy his justice and to be able to pardon the sin. He punished our first parents, but while punishing he promised reconciliation and redemption. One of their descendants shall crush the serpent's head, and lead them back again to the lost Paradise. And if we reflect upon the fruits of redemption which that descendant of the woman has brought us, through the gracious Son of divine mercy, must we not exclaim with holy church in joyful thanksgiving: "O, happy fault which has brought us such and so great a Redeemer?"

*b.* Look at later times, at *the times of Noe*, of which the Bible says: "God seeing that the wickedness of men was great on the earth, and that all the thought of their heart was bent upon evil at all times, it repented him that he had made man upon the earth. And he was touched inwardly with sorrow of heart." (Gen. 6 : 5, 6.) The men of those days were powerful giants, mighty in bodily strength, and no less so in sin and vice. So corrupt was the world that only eight just persons were found therein. Guilty man was no longer worthy to live. He was well deserving of destruction and annihilation. But did the Lord in his just anger destroy all men at once? No, for he is merciful. He saw the corruption of the world, and was touched to the heart; he repented to have made man; he wished that he had not formed him, rather than be obliged to punish him. But, after all, he did not immediately punish, but caused the coming destruction to be announced in advance to the world. In his mercy he waited to see if, perhaps, moved by his threats, men would amend their lives. How long do you think he waited for the amendment of the human race? Perhaps a whole year? Or ten, or twenty years? He waited fully one hundred and twenty years for sinners to do penance.

At the expiration of that long period, alas! mankind was no better. "And the earth was corrupted before God, and was filled with iniquity." (Gen. 6 : 11.) Now, at last, (you say) the Lord will execute his threats and chastise the world in his justice. Now, he will surely pour out the full cup of his indignation over impenitent mankind? Oh no, for he is merciful. He granted the world a new space of time for penance and amendment.

How much additional time did he grant? Perhaps a few months, or a year? The Lord waited again another hundred years. It took Noe a full hundred years to build the ark, and the building of it was a constant sermon on penance to the unbelieving spectators who watched him at his work. But, when patience was at an end, at last the terrible chastisement of the Lord descended upon the impenitent world.



c. The children of men from the beginning were giddy and volatile ; they soon again forgot the rigor of the divine chastisements. In the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha especially iniquities abounded, and the stench thereof ascended to the heights of heaven. The merciful God went down, as the Bible so beautifully says, to the earth "to see whether they have done according to the cry that is come to me, or whether it be not so that I may know." (Gen. 18 : 21.) The Lord saw that the corruption of these cities was as great as reported, and he took Abraham into his confidence. He told him that he had determined to destroy the cities of the plain. And Abraham said : " Wilt thou destroy the just with the wicked ? If there be fifty just men in the city shall they perish withal ? " And the answer was : " If I find in Sodom fifty just I will spare the whole place for their sake." Abraham continued to beg the Lord to spare the city even if only forty-five just men were found in it. This also he was promised. Abraham continued to intercede and came down to forty, thirty, twenty, and ten, until at last God promised he would spare the city if even ten just were found in it.

Should not our confidence, then, in the Divine mercy be as firm as a rock ? Although we may be great sinners in God's sight, we have also great intercessors in heaven, even as Abraham was the intercessor for the guilty cities. We have not only one intercessor ; we have as many as there are Saints in heaven ; and at the head of them stands the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of mercy. The only begotten Son of God is our Advocate and Mediator with his Father.

d. I might go on to tell you of *David*, who fell so deeply into sin, and was pardoned by the Lord because of his sincere repentance. I might tell you of the *Ninevites* whom God pardoned because of the penance which they did ; or of *King Pharaoh*, whose obdurate heart God, in his mercy, sought to soften by numerous miracles. But I have a still stronger proof to offer you which proclaims the mercy of God louder and more powerfully than all the marvelous manifestations of the Old Testament. *It is Jesus Christ, our Saviour, the infinite mercy and love of the Father, incarnate amongst us.*

II. God, in his love (as I have already said), promised a Redeemer to our first parents, after their sin. When the fulness of time was come he verified his promise, and sent his Only-begotten Son into the world, that he might crush the serpent's head, and lead us back to the lost Paradise. Could God manifest his mercy in a more beautiful manner ? Could he give us a stronger proof thereof ? What would you think of that victorious king who, instead of punishing his captive enemy, delivers his own and only son to be killed in his stead ? Would you not mock at such an excess of mercy ? What answer, then, will



you make to your God when he cries out to you : " As I live, I will not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked be converted and live? "

1. As it was infinite mercy that drew our Redeemer down from heaven to earth, so this same mercy governed him during his whole human life. " The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." " Come to me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." (Matth. 11: 28.) " They who are in health need not the physician ; but they that are sick." (Luke 5 : 31.)

2. Remember the master of the house who forgave his servant the great debt ; or the other one, who sent out his servants at the eleventh hour to hire laborers for his vineyard ; and who paid to the last comer the full day's wages, even as to the first. Think of that gardener who did not immediately cut down the barren tree, but who begged that it might be spared ; and meanwhile used every means to render it fruitful. Consider the good Samaritan who tenderly nursed the wounded man who had fallen among robbers ; took him upon his shoulders, placed him in an inn, and provided for his further care. Remember the father who receives again into his house the Prodigal Son after his great ingratitude, and who, full of joy at his return, makes a feast for him, clothes him anew, and places a ring upon his finger. Meditate on the subject of our present Gospel, on the Good Shepherd, who leaves the ninety-and-nine sheep in the wilderness in order to seek the one that was lost. Or, contemplate the woman who lights a candle in order to look for the lost penny, and who, like the Good Shepherd, calls together her friends and neighbors, and invites them to rejoice over the finding of that which was lost. Does not every parable of the Gospel tell us in a different manner, how merciful God is ?

3. And the words of our Saviour were always proved and enforced by his actions. How gently he rebukes the disciples, when in their great zeal, they wish to call down fire from heaven upon the cities which refused to receive their divine Master ! He approaches the gates of Jerusalem, and tears roll down from his merciful eyes over the ungrateful city whose destruction he foresees. There is no kind of sin, and no depth of human misery, towards which he did not show compassion. He called St. Matthew (who had been a publican and a sinner), from the gates of the custom-house, and made him his apostle. He entered the house of Zaccheus although he had been a dishonest man, and pardoned his sins. He forgave the adulteress who stood before him, covered with shame and confusion ; and he graciously

received Mary Magdalene, who had been a public sinner. The Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well (who had sinned in the same manner), he sought, in his merciful tenderness, in order to move her to repentance. St. Peter, who, after the strongest assurances of his fidelity, had denied him, he converted by a look of mercy, and made him the head of his Church, his Vicar upon earth. He prayed for his enemies and murderers upon the cross. He prayed for them in the midst of his agony, in the midst of their scorn and mockery. He received the penitent thief in the last moment of his life, and pardoned him all his sins. Even Judas, his betrayer, he would have mercifully received, if he had seen in him one spark of repentance.

4. Can you still waver in your confidence in the divine mercy? If, perhaps, until now you have been an unfruitful tree, the heavenly gardener still permits you to stand, and gives you now a fresh opportunity for penance and amendment of life. Begin in the last years of your life, yea, even at the eleventh hour, to serve your Lord, and he will graciously receive you and give you the full hire as though you had borne the burden and heat of the day. You have fallen, perhaps, among the infernal robbers of Satan, and lie wounded and bleeding on the road-side. The world passes you coldly by, and regards your wretchedness with contempt, but the Good Samaritan approaches you lovingly, heals all your wounds, and carries you mercifully in his arms. Although you may have sinned like Zaccheus and Matthew, have fallen as low as Mary Magdalene, the Samaritan woman, or the Prodigal Son, have denied the Lord like St. Peter, or sinned like the thief upon the cross—still the Lord will show you his mercy; he will press you to his fatherly heart, and invite you to the table of his love. Of you, also, will he say: "There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance." (Luke 15 : 7.)

5. The mercy of God is so exalted above the thoughts of man, that many, oppressed with the burden of sin, find it difficult to believe in this divine perfection. They listen to the whisperings of the Evil One who ever tries to drive the repentant sinner to despair. If any such have doubts of God's mercy, let them ascend with me to Calvary's height—stand under the cross, and behold the mercy of the Lord! There hangs God's Only-begotten Son on the ignominious tree, suffering a thousand agonies. He stretches out his arms to embrace you. His dying eyes are bent earthward seeking the sinner. His thorn-crowned brow has only loving thoughts for you. His parched lips are opened to call you. His head is bowed to give you the kiss of peace. His heart is pierced in order to enclose you in its depths. Every

member of his body, every drop of the precious blood, which trickles down the wood of the cross, calls aloud to us : "Behold how merciful is the Lord !" Thousands of souls have been washed clean from their sins in this precious blood ; thousands of happy Saints have been saved by the merits of Jesus Christ, which he gained for us upon the cross ; thousands of sinners, who, perhaps, have sinned more grievously than you, have become holy through God's mercy, and attained salvation.

Let us, then, cling to the gracious hand of God's compassionate love. And when the present time of mercy and of grace has passed away, may a still more gracious eternity, in which we shall fully recognize our happiness, show us still more clearly that the mercy of the Lord is great above the heavens, and his truth, even unto the clouds !  
Amen.

BISHOP EHRLER.

## FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

## THE WOUNDED HEART OF JESUS.

*“One of the soldiers opened his side with a spear : and there immediately came out blood and water.” (John 19 : 34.)*

The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was introduced into the Church in the eighteenth century. The Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque was chiefly the instrument of God for its introduction. She was a nun of the Visitation Order at Paray-le-Monial, in France. In a vision she saw the Heart of Jesus surrounded with flames, surmounted by a cross, encircled by a crown of thorns, and pierced with a gaping wound. Pointing to it, our Lord commanded her to spread among men the devotion to his Sacred Heart, that the treasures of heaven might be showered upon the world. She obeyed with all the enthusiasm of her soul, and, before her death, had the happiness of seeing the Sacred Heart of our Lord loved and worshiped in every diocese of France. It is now the most cherished devotion of the Church, and, in order to promote it, Pope Pius IX., by a decree of August 23, 1856, extended to all Christendom the celebration of a special feast in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, fixing for it the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi. In order to still further promote this beautiful devotion, I shall speak, to-day, on that Divine Heart wounded for our salvation, distinguishing

I. *The visible, and*II. *The invisible, wound of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.*

I. The visible wound was inflicted upon the Heart of Jesus by the lance of the centurion. In the Passion, as related by St. John, we read : “Then the Jews, because it was the parasceve, that the bodies might not remain upon the cross on the sabbath-day (for that was a great sabbath-day), besought Pilate, that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. The soldiers, therefore, came : and they broke the legs of the first, and of the other that was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs ; but one of the soldiers opened his side with a spear ; and immediately, there came out blood and water.” (John 19 : 31-35.)

I. This visible wound of the Sacred Heart of Jesus contains a great mystery of love. Love is known not so much by words as by works,

and by the sacrifices it makes for the object of its affection. Hence, St. John says : "Children, let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth." (1 John 3 : 18.) Such has been the love of Jesus for us ! Look up to the cross, and contemplate the wound in the sacred side ! Behold how blood and water issue from it ! What a sacrifice ! It is the last he makes for the human race, the complement of a life of thirty-three years of labor and fatigue. O, mystery of love ! such as the world has never seen, and will never see again ! He became poor that we might be enriched ; he humbled himself that we might be exalted ; he died that we might live. Greater love than this no man hath, than that he lay down his life *for his friends*. What shall we say, then, of him who dies *for his enemies* ? Being enemies of God, we were reconciled to him by the death of his Son. Now, you will understand the words of St. Paul : "Christ loved me and delivered himself for me" (Gal. 2 : 20) ; as well as those other words of St. John : "Having loved his own, he loved them to the end." (John 13 : 1.)

Since, then, the Sacred Heart of Jesus is all love, all tenderness for us, we must give him our undivided love, our whole heart. This he demands, when he says : "Son, give me thy heart." Sacrifice every thing for the love of Jesus, yea, even, if need be, the last drop of your heart's blood. Give that love the first and principal place in your heart ; renounce and abjure every love that is incompatible therewith.

2. The wound of the Sacred Heart of Jesus contains not only a *mystery of love, but also of grace*. "One of the soldiers opened his side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water." The Evangelist makes use of a very appropriate term. He does not say that the soldier *pierced*, or *wounded*, our Lord's side, but that he *opened* it, in order to signify, as it were, that the *fountain of life* was then opened to all, giving vent to the Holy Sacraments, without which no one can be saved. That blood which was shed has been shed unto the remission of sins ; that water is mingled with the chalice of salvation, and is for us both laver and drink. Christ's open side is a figure of the door in Noe's ark, through which entered the animals that were to be saved from the deluge. The Heart of Jesus is the true Ark of salvation, preserving us from the deluge of sin. His heart is a treasure-house of grace ; and, since it was opened with a spear, all the riches of his love and mercy have flowed forth upon us in the life-giving Sacraments.

3. Another mystery which we see in the wound of the side of Jesus is *the beginning and origin of the Church*. As from the side of the sleep-

ing Adam, Eve, the mother of the living, was formed, and, by the decree of God, became his lawful, wedded wife, so out of the side of Christ, slumbering in death, the Church, the Mother of the faithful, came forth and was wedded to him by his heavenly Father as a Bride without spot or blemish. Behold the mystery of the wounded Heart of Jesus! We are children of this true and only saving Church, into which we have entered by Baptism, and in which we are nourished with the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer, the Shepherd of our souls.

II. The invisible wound of the Heart of Jesus is inflicted by every grievous sin that man commits. Allow me to remind you of a remarkable passage in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews: "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, have tasted also the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, have moreover tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, and are fallen away, to be renewed again unto penance, crucifying again unto themselves the Son of God, making a mockery of him." True, St. Paul here speaks especially of apostates and infidels, but, in a wider sense, all those are meant who commit a mortal sin, for they crucify Christ again and make a mockery of him. This being presupposed, let us consider the invisible wound which such men inflict on the loving, tender heart of Jesus.

1. First, how great is the *malice* of such a sinner! Certain it is, that each mortal sin is a rebellion of the creature against the Creator, a rejection of his holy law, an act of black ingratitude against so good a God. Now, considering mortal sin in this light in reference to Christ, its malice appears rather greater than less, for, by mortal sin, man inflicts a broad and deep wound upon the loving Heart of Jesus, and from the cross Christ cries out to every sinner: "*Thou hast wounded my heart.*" (Cant. 4: 9.) "Thou hast wounded my heart!" he cries out to the *vindictive*, who refuse to forgive injuries and offenses, who meditate revenge, and will not be reconciled. "Thou hast wounded my heart!" he says to the *unjust* man who lays his hand upon his neighbor's goods, who by theft, lying, cheating, or any kind of injustice, increases his worldly substance. "Thou hast wounded my heart!" he exclaims to *parents* who neglect the care of those under their charge, and who, by evil words and bad example, cause their own ruin and that of their children. "Thou hast wounded my heart!" he exclaims from the cross to *all sons and daughters* who do not obey their parents; who grieve them by their bad conduct, and thus embitter their days. "Thou hast wounded my heart!" he cries out to *every one who knowingly and wilfully violates the law of God or of his Church.*



2. Let us consider the *pain* which the wound of Sin inflicts upon the heart of Jesus. When the soldier's spear opened his side and transfixed his divine Heart, Jesus felt no pain, for we read : " When they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs, but one of the soldiers opened his side with a spear." A wound after death can give no pain. But the case is different with the wound of Sin. The latter gives the heart of Jesus great pain. How could it be otherwise ? The wound is inflicted by his own children, whom he loves most tenderly, for whom he endured every kind of hardship for thirty-three years ; for whom he watched and prayed whole nights, for whom he suffered and died. On these ungrateful children he has lavished the treasures of his grace. He protects and blesses them ; he makes them heirs of his kingdom, and partakers of the heavenly marriage feast. With justice, therefore, he complains : " If an enemy had done this, I would verily have borne with it, and if he who hated me had spoken great things against me, I might have hid myself before him ; but that my friend, who has tasted sweet things together with me,—that my child whom I have carried in my Heart, to whom I have revealed its secrets, and for whom I have shed my blood, should have done this wicked thing—oh ! what a pain ! " Remember, my friend, the day will come when that sweet Jesus, who is your Redeemer, will be your Judge. You will have to appear before him whose Heart you now so often and so cruelly pierce ; and then you shall see, as clearly as if it were written in the beams of the sun, what an immense mountain of guilt you have heaped up for the day of Judgment, a mountain which can not be leveled for all eternity. What will be your feelings and your sentiments, when your God and Judge shall say to you : " Depart from Me, whose love you have despised, whose graces you have abused ; depart from my divine Heart, into everlasting fire, which is prepared for the devil and his associates ? " You will call on the mountains to fall upon you, and the hills to cover you. But then, alas ! it will be too late,—too late, —too late !

" Now is the acceptable time ; now is the day of salvation." Embrace it, and have immediate recourse to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Do you not see how it bleeds, how it is open to receive you ? This blood is the price of our Redemption, it cleanses us from all sin. This door leads into the sanctuary of his divine Love, where you may find forgiveness and holy peace. Bewail your sins at the foot of the cross, confess them candidly, sincerely, and with a firm resolution of amendment,—and then, depart no more from the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the asylum of penitent souls, and the fountain of every grace and blessing.

A. W. O. S. B.

## FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## AVARICE.

*"Master, we have labored all the night, and have taken nothing."* (Luke 5 : 5.)

Job justly called this earth "a land of misery and darkness"; for those that serve the world "walk in darkness." (Job. 10 : 22.) They labor like the spiders, who generally spin their webs in the night, but, with the dawn of day, the house-maid comes, and with a stroke of her broom destroys all their work. Many men toil hard their whole lives, but their labors being directed to the world, and not to God, at the hour of death, if not sooner, they find that their toil, like the spider's, has been all in vain. This applies more especially, my brethren, to the avaricious ; and to-day, I wish to place plainly before your eyes the absolute folly of their course. I will prove to them

I. *That their labors are great ; and*

II. *That they are fruitless.*

The avaricious labor the livelong night, that is, through their whole lives, like the fishermen of the Gospel, and still catch nothing ; for, as St. Bernard says, "They toil to acquire riches ; but, they no sooner acquire them than they lose them."

I. The labor of the avaricious is great ; they impose

1. *Great burdens upon the body, and*

2. *Heavy cares upon the soul.*

1. Adam was obliged, in punishment of his sin, to hear from God these tremendous words: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." (Gen. 3 : 19.) This punishment is the especial portion of the avaricious. "Behold how much toil your riches cost you !" says St. Bernard. "You sail over seas, you open a new world, only a couple of inches of wood stands between you and death when you are in the ship. You forsake your fatherland, your parents, your wife and children, you set aside all the ties of love and friendship. What folly is this, O you children of Adam, to cross the seas, to wander through a hemisphere, in toil, in watching and fasting, in constant danger of death !" Although all avaricious men do not encounter all these hardships, yet they meet with the greater part of them. Behold the merchant in his store, the mechanic in his work-shop, the soldier in camp, the husbandman at his plough, and you will see the many dangers that

threaten the pursuer of this world's riches and honor. They all watch and labor in the sweat of the brow ; and, God, grant that their toil be not in the night and in vain !

2. To these physical hardships we must add all the mental anxieties which beset the avaricious. His eager pursuit of wealth ; his untiring endeavors to keep, and to increase it ; his sorrow, when, by some accident, he meets with losses either of money or goods ; his dread of thieves, his anxiety regarding the state of the money-market, or of commerce—all these are sources of constant torture to the miser. St. Bonaventure compares him to a boisterous sea, since he can find no rest, either in his conscience or his domestic concerns ; as it is said in Holy Scriptures : “ He that is greedy of gain, troubleth his own house.” (Prov. 15 : 27.) St. Ambrose compares the vice of avarice to rust, for as rust consumes iron, so avarice consumes the spirit.” “ We shall find all precious substances,” says the miser, “ we shall fill our houses with spoils.” (Prov. 1 : 13.) “ Of what use is it, O man,” exclaims St. Augustine, “ that you fill your coffers with gold, while at the same time, you are not secure in the possession of them ? You have enriched your house, but have you any guarantee against thieves ? You have found gold, but through it you have lost your peaceful slumbers.” The Wise Man, also, says : “ All his days are full of sorrows and miseries, even in the night he doth not rest in mind.” (Ecclus. 2 : 23.)

II. Great and arduous as may be the labors of the avaricious, they are still fruitless. And why ? Because the miser seeks his satisfaction in a source which is utterly incapable of contenting him ; in other words :

1. *He is consumed with an ardent desire for riches ; and*
2. *He is tortured by his inability to retain them.*

1. Riches can never satisfy the avaricious heart ; the glitter of gold blinds it. The more it possesses, the more it desires. Holy Writ confirms this, saying : “ One is as it were rich, when he hath nothing ; and another is as it were poor, when he hath great riches.” (Prov. 13 : 7.) St. Ambrose makes the following reflections on the greed of a miser : “ He who possesses a superfluity, imagines himself to be in need ; for he holds that all that others have, is so much taken from himself. He strives after all worldly goods, and when he has obtained them, he is not yet satisfied.” “ He hungers after earthly possessions like a beggar,” says St. Bernard ; “ and although he may have much of them, he yet ceases not to beg.” “ The eye of the covetous man is insatiable in his portion of iniquity ; he will not be satisfied till he consume his own soul, drying it up.” (Ecclus. 14 : 9.) “ A covetous man shall not.

be satisfied with money, and he that loveth riches shall reap no fruit from them." (Ecclus. 5 : 9.) St. Augustine compares the heart of a miser to hell ; for no matter how much hell may swallow up, it is still too little ; and, the miser, although he may possess all the treasures of earth, is not yet satisfied.

2. And if the present furnishes no satisfaction to the covetous man, how can he expect it in the future ? He has not labored that he may possess the fruits of his toil, but that he may lose them. What would it avail him to have gained the whole world ? "The figure of this world passeth away," says the Apostle St. Paul. (1 Cor. 7 : 31.) "Surely, man passeth as an image." (Ps. 38 : 7.) "He storeth up ; and he knoweth not for whom he shall gather these things." (Ibid.) Thus, he has labored for strangers ; he has toiled in darkness, and caught nothing. "They have broken the eggs of asps, and have woven the webs of spiders." (Isai. 59 : 5.) Finally, "They have slept their sleep ; and all the men of riches have found nothing in their hands." (Ps. 75 : 6.) As holy Job prophesied : "The rich man, when he shall sleep, shall take away nothing with him ; he shall open his eyes and find nothing." (Job 27 : 19.) Nothing ! alas, nothing !

Dearly beloved, "we brought nothing into this world ; and certainly we can carry nothing out. But having food, and wherewithal to be covered, with these we are content." (1 Tim. 6 : 7, 8.) Although we should possess all the wealth of the world, what will be our thoughts upon the bed of death ? Only these : "What hath pride profited us ; or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us ?" (Wis. 5 : 8.) In that solemn hour, we shall find with Peter, that we have labored all the night, and have taken nothing. We have toiled in vain under our heavy burden. "We have walked through hard ways. We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction. Therefore, we have erred from the way of truth, but the way of the Lord we have not known." (Wis. 5 : 6, 7.) No, my beloved brethren ! "Make to yourselves bags which grow not old, a treasure in heaven which faileth not. (Luke 12 : 33.) Strive after justice, faith, and love. These are the true riches. They are hidden in the soul, safe from the thieving attempts of robbers. Only guard well your coffer, that is, your conscience, and then, neither a thief nor an enemy (no matter how powerful) shall be able to rob you of your treasure. Even if you should suffer shipwreck, and barely escape with your life, no injury would befall your eternal riches. For, accident may deprive you of money, lands, and all earthly goods—but there still remains to you your chief treasure, your everlasting Good, the God who will be his faithful servants' exceeding great reward. Amen.

## FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## RELIGION AND LABOR.

*"At thy word I will let down the net. And when they had done this, they enclosed a very great multitude of fishes, and their net was breaking." (Luke 5 : 5, 6.)*

The Gospel of this day touches the relation of religion to labor, and teaches us in what manner the latter must be undertaken and performed in order to prove a blessing and a benefit to man. One of the great questions of our day, the so-called *social question*, is indicated and solved in its main point. This, the most difficult and troublesome problem of the nineteenth century, now agitates the nations ; and the grandest intellects of our time are engaged in its solution, striving to point out the means by which the needs of the working classes may be alleviated or satisfied. You are not ignorant of the suggestions or propositions of these learned men. While some, indifferent to religion, imagine that the poor can be helped only by their own industry, or the assistance of their fellow-men, or through the establishment of labor unions and co-operative associations, others see in religion an open enemy and secret obstacle to temporal prosperity. They think that we shall have better times only when religion will be entirely done away with, when holy days shall be abolished, and every influence of the Church upon public life extinguished. Our doctrine of the true rights of man, our rigid distinctions between *mine* and *thine*, our admonition to the practice of humility, modesty and temperance, our counsels to patience and contentment, are extremely burdensome to them and contrary to their opinions. Let man but free himself altogether from the trammels of Christianity, from the craven fear of Eternity, they say, and the social question will easily be solved. In the mean time, they would have the state pass laws depriving the rich of a portion of their property, in order to give it to the poor. That which can not be accomplished by the passage of such laws, say they, must be done by revolution and bloodshed. Vain, unfortunate theories, which will only render their adherents more miserable and discontented than before. The miseries of earth can not be remedied by the natural genius or industry of man, much less by injustice, theft, or violence. *Human industry and labor must be blessed and aided by God.* Herein lies the solution of the great social question. Men must clearly recognize the importance of labor ; they must begin again to labor as



Christians, under the invocation of the name of Jesus, applying and using the fruit of their toil according to the principles of the Gospel. That which labor alone can not accomplish, religion, by its graces and salutary institutions, will fully effect. It is the only power which, with gentle but firm hand, can equalize and reconcile the great contradictions of life. Let us, to-day, consider the relation of *religion*

I. *As to the importance of labor.*

II. *As to the manner in which we should labor.*

III. *As to the application of the fruit of labor.*

I. What is *labor* in the light of religion? This question must first be answered if we intend to perform our labor in a Christian manner. It is just the understanding of this question which is wanting to most men.

1. No one can deny that, in our days, a great deal of work is done. Men labor unceasingly from morning till night, and from night till morning, all over the broad expanse of earth. A numberless army and array of machines, railroads, telegraphs, telephones, electrical inventions, are employed to hasten and facilitate labor. Machinery relieves, it is true, and yet, on the other hand, often increases the burden of the laborer. It has destroyed the joy and dignity of labor. Man has become in his turn a mere automaton, and woe to him if he does not, in the sweat of his brow, keep step with the remorseless wheels that drive him onward. All his higher spiritual powers and faculties must succumb to soulless, grinding toil. Whence comes this heavy yoke of labor which our present age has laid upon the neck of man? What are the motives of this vast army of laborers? This one works because he must; because the necessities of life, the care and support of himself and family demand of him a certain amount of toil. If necessity did not drive him to it, he would willingly sit in idleness. He regards his daily labor with deep dissatisfaction and bitter rancor. Full of discontent, he envies those who can live without work, and he curses his fate that has condemned him to so hard a lot. Another one labors; he is a model of diligence and activity, but his only desire is to become rich. He spares himself neither pain nor anxiety; all he wants is to make money, so that he may give himself up to idleness, and gratify the sinful desires of his corrupt heart. Another, again, labors because ambition urges him on, or some other low passion rules him. The thirst for wealth is an insatiable one; the covetous man always seeks greater riches and higher gain. Who shall discover and name all the motives that spur men on to labor and activity?

2. The Christian does not work unwillingly, or because necessity



compels him thereto. He labors from a sense of duty, and a pure desire of fulfilling God's holy will. Religion teaches him that labor is the first of the divine precepts to man. It leads him back to the beginning of the human race, to Adam and Eve in their original holiness and justice, who, even in the Garden of Eden, complied with the command of labor. "And the Lord God took man and put him into the paradise of pleasure to dress it and to keep it." (Gen. 2 : 15.)

3. But religion discloses to us another view of the importance of labor. In the primitive days of innocence God commanded man to labor, but that command became still more binding after the fall of Adam. Since the first sin in Eden labor has become the bounden duty of man. The Lord said to Adam : "Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat, cursed is the earth in thy work : with labor and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee ; and thou shalt eat the herbs of the earth. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the earth, out of which thou wast taken." (Gen. 3 : 17-19.) The soil of this earth is accursed on account of sin. Only reluctantly, and after hard tillage, does it yield man a support. Labor is no longer a glad and joyful service of the Lord, but a painful toil in the sweat of our brow. It is hard and wholesome punishment, from which man shall not be released until he sinks down into the dust of the earth out of which he was taken.

4. Religion teaches still more concerning the importance of labor. It explains the measure of work required from each man. It is not so much the duty of labor in general which causes discontent in the human heart, but the diversities of labor, the unequal distribution of earthly goods, the different stations of life, which beget the envy and discontent. The man who earns a bare livelihood, by the hardest labor, looks with anger and hatred at his neighbor, who wins his thousands with but little exertion. Are not these the thoughts which incite turbulent spirits to anarchy and revolution ? What does religion say on this point ? That various conditions of society, a certain inequality in the distribution of the goods of fortune, are unavoidably necessary for the duration of the world, and the building up of God's Kingdom in peace and order. The various gifts of the Creator impose upon each individual a different amount of labor. With one it is spiritual, with another corporal ; this one has an easy, the other a hard, task. Religion also tells man that every labor is imposed by God, and that the humblest and most insignificant work is great in his eyes, if it be done with a pure intention and for the furtherance of his glory. Relig-

ion adds to this the doctrine that the eternal reward will be proportioned to the amount of labor and the number of talents, as well as to the zeal and diligence of the worker.

II. Religion teaches man also *the conditions of labor*, or how he must work in order to render his labor acceptable to God and profitable to himself.

1. The Apostles have labored all the night, and taken nothing. The Lord comes and says : "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." "At thy word I will let down the net," replies Simon Peter. "And when they had done this they enclosed a very great multitude of fishes, and their net was breaking." Behold here the conditions for the success of labor. "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." Earnest, untiring toil and exertion are the first things which God requires of us. He who does not launch out into the deep and exert all his strength will gain little or nothing. He who does not fulfil all the requirements of his vocation, as far as his powers reach, will not obtain the approval and blessing of God. He might have bestowed upon us his blessing without labor, and given us the necessities of life without toil. But he wished to have industrious beings in his kingdom, who would exert themselves and labor with him for the continuance of the world, and for the building up of his holy realm upon earth. His creatures must work in order to deserve his blessing. Did not our Saviour labor for thirty-three years? Did he not toil in Nazareth, and teach and preach in Jerusalem, for love of us? Does not the earth, year after year, return to the Lord the full harvest of that which he deposits in its bosom? The flower always puts forth new buds and blossoms; the tree bears its fruit, the bird sings its song, and revolving stars shine in the skies. And we men, who recognize the existence of God, shall we not work unceasingly for him? If we do not, we are the idlest and most ungrateful beings in the wide kingdom of his creation.

2. Aside from these higher and nobler motives, the times in which we live demand of us untiring and unceasing labor. The great progress, at present, in every department of trade and industry, in commerce and business, and in the higher aims of life, as well as the increased expenditures entailed by the commonest mode of living—all call for a greater activity of human powers than in any former time. No talent must be misused or neglected, no hour must be misspent or wasted, if we would not experience the fate of the unprofitable servant who was cast out into exterior darkness. Idlers the Lord can not endure in his household, and even the world hates and despises them.

3. Labor, therefore, is the first condition of life, and more so, of a Christian life. It is the favorite libel and false reproach of unbelievers, that religion fosters idleness, inasmuch as it turns men's eyes from temporal things, to fix them upon the eternal. On the contrary, if all Christians were conscientious and faithful to their God, much of the poverty, which has its root in idleness and the neglect of the duties of one's state of life, would totally disappear.

4. But religion requires from its followers something higher and more important than restless and untiring industry. It admonishes us to labor *with prayer*, with the *invocation of the holy name of Jesus*, and with *pious dependence on God*, from whom alone every blessing comes. "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Unless the Lord keeps the city, he watches in vain that keepeth it." (Ps. 126 : 1.) "Neither he that planteth is any thing, nor he that watereth, but God who giveth the increase." (1 Cor. 3 : 7.)

5. For this reason our holy Church teaches us to begin every work with prayer, and in the name of Jesus, that the Lord may strengthen our weakness with his gracious assistance, and bless our undertakings. He calls upon us to regard heaven as the highest aim of our exertions, and to recognize labor as a blessing, and not as a curse. Remember the words of our Saviour : "Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God, and his justice : and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. 6 : 33.) "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8 : 36.)

III. Lastly, let us consider the teachings of Religion with regard to *the legitimate results of Labor*. The fruits of Labor may be happy and blessed, but they may be also the reverse. Religion admonishes man to moderation, not to be overbearing *in prosperity*, and to use the blessings of God wisely and according to his holy will ; and it also exhorts him to bow down with confidence under the hand of God *in adversity*.

A. 1. St. Peter did as our Saviour commanded. At his word, he let down the net, and they enclosed a very great multitude of fishes, and their net was breaking with its load. And they beckoned to their partners—and filled both the ships, so that they were almost sinking. Which, when Simon Peter saw, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying : "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." How often is this rich draught of fishes repeated in human life ? Many let down the net of labor, and receive a rich return. Every thing that they do redounds to their profit. The Lord often shows himself most prodigal in his gifts ; his blessings flow forth in abundant torrents. How should a Christian regard and employ the fruits of his labor ?

2. Religion teaches him first to look up to God as the Author of all good, the true and only founder of his prosperity. With Simon Peter, he acknowledges his own unworthiness. "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy name give glory" (Ps. 113 : 9) : these must be our sentiments when God blesses our labors. Without his help, all our efforts are poor and worthless, and the strongest exertion of our powers useless and vain. The greater the blessings which God bestows upon man, the more should he humble himself, and say : "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

3. Religion tells man to estimate temporal blessings at their true value. The grandest of earthly goods, and the greatest abundance of temporal things, are, in the eyes of the Christian, only vain and perishable dust, not worthy of a place in his heart. He considers earthly things always in the light of heaven, of eternity. He places God's love, favor, and grace, above all riches and earthly happiness.

4. Religion also teaches man to use earthly blessings wisely and justly. Not for comfort and ease, not for the gratification of sinful lusts and passions, does God grant us these blessings. In his sight, we are not the owners of such goods, but only his stewards, strictly accountable to him for the use of his gifts. It is for his own honor, and the salvation of souls that he has transferred to man the use of his property. He who in the selfishness of his heart heaps up goods upon goods, lays up capital upon capital, and endeavors with his gains to build up an enormous fortune without considering the weal or woe of his neighbor, acts as little in accordance with the purposes of God as the dishonest steward who squanders the property of his master. Greater accumulation of earthly goods upon the one hand produces greater want and poverty upon the other ; and Christian charity is bound to step forward and adjust the difference, so that the rich by giving with humility, and the poor receiving with humility, may merit the good pleasure of a common Father in heaven ; and both reach happily their final goal.

B. 1. But if God does not see fit to crown our labor with success, again, it is Religion which comforts and helps man in his distress. St. Peter and his companions had labored all the night, and had taken nothing. But we hear from them no words of discontent or bitterness. With confidence Peter answers the Lord : "At thy word, I will let down the net." How often are man's efforts fruitless. The majority of mankind must bear the burden of want and poverty. "The poor you have always with you" (Matt. 26 : 11), said our Lord. Shall discontent and despair seize the soul of him who toils with all his strength, and yet sees no result from his labor ?

2. Religion stands at his side, strengthening and supporting him. It teaches him that his heavenly Father refuses him temporal blessings in order to bestow upon him eternal ones in a much greater degree. Before God there is no labor without results. The most insignificant toil carries in it the germ of an infinite blessing, and the germ must unfailingly develop itself if the labor is performed purely for God's honor. If the seed produces no earthly fruit, its blossoms will be all the lovelier and more fragrant in heaven. What is done for God, cannot go unrewarded. "Going they went and wept, casting their seeds. But coming, they shall come with joyfulness, carrying their sheaves." (Ps. 125 : 6-7.)

3. With its graces and heavenly consolations, Religion constantly directs the eyes of the unsuccessful toiler towards that better land where "every man's work shall be made manifest." (1 Cor. 3 : 13.) It promises him a magnificent reward for every hour of labor and disappointment borne with Christian patience and perseverance. When the curtain of this earthly life shall have fallen, men will no longer act the rôle they have played in this world. The king will quit his throne, and lay aside his mantle, crown, and scepter ; the mighty will resign his temporary power and dominion ; the rich man will cast away his long-hoarded gold and silver. Then, also, the poor will put off their wretched garments, and the oppressed their lowly abjection. Nothing will remain but the soul and God ; and each man will be judged by the manner in which he has comprehended and carried out the will of God in his regard. Then, as the Lord has said, "the last shall be first and the first last"—if the last shall have labored more faithfully than the first.

Perform your life-work in this spirit, my brethren ; apply the fruit of your labor according to the principles of the Gospel ; and accept the fortunate or unfortunate result of your toil in submission to the will and purposes of God, and each one of you, in your measure, will be helping to solve the grand social question of the day. If the Church could develop untrammelled her supernatural means for the good of mankind, it would soon be most satisfactorily solved. But Religion, alone, can give a satisfactory answer to this great question. Religion must be the soul of labor, consecrating and elevating it to higher aims. If, at its word, we let down the net, we shall draw forth a rich draught of unchanging, everlasting blessings. Amen.

BISHOP EHRLER.



## FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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 ANGER.

*"But I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be guilty of the judgment."* (Matth. 5 : 22.)

Our Saviour came not into the world to destroy the Mosaic law, but to fulfil it, that is, to perfect it. He desired that men should not merely observe the letter of the law (as the Scribes and Pharisees did) ; but that they should act according to its spirit. The commandment given to Moses said : "Thou shalt not kill" (Matth. 5 : 21) ; and whosoever broke this commandment by committing actual murder, became "guilty of the judgment." Our Saviour perfected this command by saying : "I, as the Law-giver of the New Testament, say and command you to avoid, not only actual murder, but, also, all anger against your neighbor." For even if the anger of the heart is hidden from the cognizance of human justice, it is still open to the eyes of divine justice. To-day, I shall speak of the enormity of this sin ; and will furnish you with convincing proofs that wilful anger is

- I. *A great sin*; and
- II. *The cause of still greater sins.*

These truths are of great weight ; and if we rightly comprehend them, they will surely preserve us from giving way to this deadly sin.

I. Anger is directly inimical

- 1. *To the nature of man* ; and
- 2. *To his social life.*

1. Man is distinguished from the brutes by the use of reason ; but, when anger has once taken possession of a man's heart, it entirely deprives him of reason, and transforms him, as by the spell of some diabolical magician, into an irrational brute. "An angry man," says St. Bonaventure, "resembles a wild boar ; for, as the boar blindly rushes upon the hunter's spear, so the angry man, as if out of himself, rushes into all vices, such as quarrelling, injurious conduct, and murder." "Their madness is according to the likeness of a serpent." (Ps. 67 : 5.) "There is no head worse than the head of a serpent, and there is no anger above the anger of a woman." (Ecclus. 25 : 22.)



2. Since the wrathful transform themselves into beasts, the Wise Man continues : "It will be more agreeable to abide with a lion and a dragon than to dwell with a wicked woman." (Ecclus. 28 : 23.) The Apostle admonishes us, saying : "Be angry and sin not." (Ephes. 4 : 26.) And why does he say this? "For we are members of one another." (Verse 25.) We can not avoid human society ; we are brethren ; and brotherly love is sooner injured by anger, than by any other vice. St. Ambrose, commenting upon the advice which Joseph gave to his brethren, "Be not angry in the way," (Gen. 45 : 24) makes this beautiful remark : "With how much reason did Joseph warn his brothers against anger ; because anger is able to separate even the loving hearts of brothers."

## II. Anger may be distinguished, my dearly beloved,

1. *As remaining hidden in the heart ; or*
2. *As breaking out in action.*

1. "The anger of man worketh not the justice of God." (James 1 : 20.) By this the Apostle means to say, that from an angry man nothing good is to be expected. Tell me, whence arise the greatest crimes, such as enmity, hatred of the neighbor, bitterness of spirit, envy, jealousy, rash judgments, and thousands of other sins? If you search for their origin, you will find that all these vices spring from anger which has not been suppressed ; from dislike of the neighbor which has not been vanquished ; from some insult which added fuel to the flames of wrath. We gave way to our passion ; we did not foresee its ruinous consequences ; and, at last, the tiny spark which we overlooked kindled a great conflagration which now it is impossible to extinguish. "Behold how a small fire kindleth a great wood," says the Apostle. (James 3 : 5.)

2. Bad as are the effects of interior anger, they are still more dreadful when the unsuppressed passion breaks forth into action. There is no crime, however great, which an angry man may not commit in his first fury. Quarrelling, intemperance, railing and cursing, rebellion against God, murder,—all these terrible sins follow in the train of anger. What wild beast is so cruel and ravenous as an angry man? "Quarrel not with a passionate man," says the Wise Man, "for blood is as nothing in his sight." (Ecclus. 8 : 19.) Anger sharpens the dagger ; it causes one man to slay another ; brothers no longer recognize the sweet fraternal tie ; parents and children (under its influence) forget their natural relations ; above all, the angry man forgets himself, and no longer knows what he does or says.

“Let all bitterness, and anger, and indignation, and clamor, and blasphemy, be taken away from you, with all malice.” (Ephes. 4 : 31.) If you must indulge anger, my brethren, be angry with yourselves. “I would that you should be angry and sin not,” says St. Augustine ; “but with whom can you be thus angry except with yourself, for what is a penitent but a man who is angry with himself ?” Ah ! if any one of you entertain a secret antipathy towards your neighbor, seek an opportunity of being reconciled with him. If you do not do this, then all your prayers and good works are displeasing to God. The words of our present Gospel are very explicit upon this point : “If thou offerest thy gift at the altar, and there shalt remember that thy brother hath any thing against thee ; leave there thy gift before the altar, and first go to be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” (Matth. 5 : 23, 24.)

B.

## FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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THS JUSTICE WHICH MERITS HEAVEN.

*“ Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 5 : 20.)*

The Catholics of this lukewarm age who obey all the laws of the Church as strictly as the Pharisees those of the synagogue ;—who fast, and pray, and give alms, as they did,—are, no doubt, regarded by the world as exceptionally virtuous, as bright examples of Christian perfection. Were any one to say, that such would not be saved,—that more was required in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven, the majority of men might well exclaim in astonishment : “ Verily the kingdom of heaven suffers violence ! ” How shall *we* be saved, if they are in danger of being cast away whose penitential works, whose charitable acts, and virtuous conduct, are acknowledged by all ? Yet, my dear Christians, be not dismayed, but let us to-day, proceed to consider :

- I. *What was wanting in the justice of the Scribes and Pharisees ; and*
- II. *What must be our justice in order to merit heaven ?*

I. In order to please God, our works must not only be performed in the state of sanctifying grace, but also with sincerity of heart, so that the interior may correspond with the exterior. In every action, there must be a pure intention, joined with humility and charity. These great requisites (as we learn from the Gospel) were wanting in the Scribes and Pharisees.

1. Exteriorly, these would-be teachers and leaders of the Jews were extremely exact. They took good care to observe to *the letter* the law of Moses and the traditions of their forefathers. For this, indeed, our dear Lord would not have blamed them. If their extreme reverence for that Law had proceeded from the heart, he would not have compared them to whitened sepulchres outwardly fair and clean, but within, full of dead men’s bones and of all filthiness. (Matt. 23 : 27.) They were never seen in the company of publicans and sinners. They regarded such men as outcasts, unworthy even to touch their garments ; they feared to be contaminated by their very presence. Yet they must have known that before the all-seeing eye of God they were guilty of

injustice and uncharitableness, of pride and self-conceit, and of many other secret and abominable vices. Hypocrites, as they were, they were blind to their own glaring sins, whilst they were keenly alive to the slightest faults and imperfections in others. Our Lord therefore said to them: "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; who pay tithe of mint, and anise and cummin, and have left alone the weightier things of the law, judgment, and mercy, and faith. These things you ought to have done, and not to leave those others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat, and swallow a camel." (Matt. 23: 23-24.) Would to God that in these days we had none of these hypocrites, these whitened sepulchres, outwardly virtuous and good, but inwardly enslaved to passions and vices. Let it not be said of you, at least, my dear Christians, that whilst you are scrupulous about your devotions and pious exercises, you have not charity which is the soul of the law. Let it not be said that you, too, are capable of "straining a gnat and devouring a camel."

2. Vain glory was another cause of the works of the Scribes and Pharisees being worthless in the sight of God. "And all their works," says Christ, "they do for to be seen of men." (Matt. 23: 5.) Instead of performing their actions for the honor and glory of God they sought their own honor and glory in all they did. They prayed in public places, and proclaimed their so-called charitable deeds to the world. Their whole aim, in fact, was to be regarded as virtuous and holy, to be honored and praised by the people. Hence, our Lord says of them: "They love the first places at feasts, and the first chairs in the synagogues; and salutations in the market-place, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi.'" (Ibid. 6: 7.) How much are they to be pitied, who, like these teachers of Israel, labor, fast, and pray, suffer hardships and privations for the sake of self-aggrandizement, worldly interest, fame, or honor! Verily, they can not expect God to reward them; they work for the world and they must look to the world for their recompense. Of such, our Lord has said: "They have received their reward."

3. Finally, the Scribes and Pharisees were as unmerciful as they were self-complacent. Their eyes were closed to the good qualities, and open only to the imperfections and vices of their neighbors. "Seeing the mote in their brother's eye and not seeing the beam in their own eye." (Matt. 12: 3.) Hence it was, that the Pharisee in the temple, with unparalleled arrogance and self conceit, said: "I am not like the rest of men!" He regarded the poor publican with utter contempt, although the humility of the latter rendered him as acceptable to God as the Pharisee's pride and blind folly made him abominable. Hence,

also, it was, that they dared to find fault even with our divine Lord, because, in his mercy and goodness, he received sinners, conversed, and ate with them. Can any thing be conceived more detestable than the pride of these men, which led them to consider themselves better and wiser than all others, yea, even to look down with disdain upon the God Man himself? But alas ! do we not find in our days some of such would-be devout and pious people? St. Jerome, warning the Christians of his days against the sins of pride, self-conceit, and uncharitableness, said to them : “ Woe to us miserable beings, who imitate the vices of the Pharisees ! ” (Matt. 23.) Let us enter into ourselves, examine carefully our hearts, and if we find therein the traces of these most pernicious vices, let us resolve to eradicate them with all speed. Be it well understood, that our virtuous acts are devoid of all merit before God if they do not possess the qualities of Sincerity, Humility, and Charity.

## II. *Sincerity.*

1. Our works must proceed from the heart. Our actions must appear holy and just not only before men but above all, before all, before God, who penetrates the secrets of the heart, and will judge our most hidden thoughts and desires. It is, indeed, very edifying to see certain Catholics at daily Mass, at frequent Communion, performing, meanwhile, many other exterior acts of virtue. But what will all this profit them, if they merely seek thereby the applause of the people? If their piety and devotion are actuated only by human interests, vanity, or any other unholy motive, instead of being pleasing to God and deserving of reward at his hands, they draw down upon their heads, like the Pharisees of old, the divine wrath and malediction ; for these, as our divine Lord declares, “ shall receive the greater judgment.” (Mark 12: 40.)

2. *Humility* must penetrate and animate every one of our virtuous actions if they would be pleasing to God and meritorious for heaven. There can be no real virtue unless it proceeds from the root, and is built on the solid foundations, of humility. The most insignificant action done for the honor and glory of God shall receive its reward, while, on the other hand, the most brilliant and heroic deeds performed for the sake of self-aggrandizement are utterly fruitless for heaven. How forcibly does Jesus Christ express this truth when he says : “ Take heed that you do not your justice before men, that you may be seen by them, otherwise you shall not have a reward from your Father who is in heaven.” (Matt. 11:1.) It is true, we must give a good example to our neighbor ; but as St. Gregory the Great beautifully says : “ Let your work so appear before the world, that your

intention be to please God alone." If we can say before God that such, indeed, is our intention,—that our good works proceed from that humble disposition which attributes nothing to self, but all to God, then may we confidently hope that our justice will abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees.

3. *Charity* and forbearance with the faults and shortcomings of others must, furthermore, guide us in the practice of virtue, if we would merit the reward promised by our Lord Jesus Christ. The truly pious Christian, instead of observing and exaggerating the imperfections of his neighbor, will be blinded thereto by a holy charity and will earnestly endeavor to hide them from the sight of others. Well aware of his own misery and sinfulness, he is far removed from any sentiments of self-complacency or censoriousness. Having a kind word for all, it may be said of him what the Holy Ghost says of the Bridegroom in the Canticles : "His lips are as a dropping honeycomb : honey and milk are under his tongue." Such a Christian as this, makes virtue indeed attractive ; and even infidels and unbelievers are forced to admire the beauty of his character. But alas ! how few there are in these degenerate days that can say before God that their lives, their pious exercises, and all their devotional practices, proceed from a heart thus animated with humility and charity !

I beg you, therefore, beloved Christians, to consider seriously the words of Jesus Christ : "Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." How many poor, unfortunate and deluded Catholics who fancied themselves just and pious because of a few badly-performed acts of prayer, penance and charity, will be disappointed on the Last Day, and filled with horror at these words of their Lord and Judge : "I know ye not, workers of iniquity !" "Not all those who say Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven." Like unto the foolish virgins, lacking the oil of charity and humility in their lamps, all their pious exercises were lost before God. They sought the praise of men, instead of that of God, and, verily, they received their sole reward here below. May God clearly enlighten you on this important point ! For, although we should say from our hearts, after we have done all that we can do, "we are but unprofitable servants," yet we know that God is good and faithful, and has promised to reward the least act done for his honor and glory. Courage, therefore, beloved Christians ! being in the employ of a rich and royal Master, do his will in all things, toiling and striving, not for worldly goods which perish, but for the eternal goods of heaven promised by Jesus Christ to those who shall do the will of his heavenly Father. Amen.

L. BAX.



## SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## ON THE DUTY OF ALMSGIVING.

*"I have compassion on the multitude : for behold, they have now been with me three days and have nothing to eat."* (Mark 8 : 2.)

After our Saviour was born into the world, "the goodness and kindness of our Saviour God appeared" in him. (Tit. 3:4.) "Before his appearance in the flesh," says St. Bernard, "kindness was almost unknown. It existed, indeed, from eternity with God ; but the extent of this goodness was not yet known to man. It was only promised to us, but we had not yet experienced its effects ; therefore many had doubted its existence." But, as soon as our Saviour appeared, goodness appeared with him ; and his "testimonies are become exceedingly credible." (Ps. 92 : 5.) He "went about doing good." (Acts 10 : 38.) Every miracle which he performed was a standing memorial of his love for man. To-day he is surrounded by a multitude, who have nothing to eat. His tender heart can bear no longer the sight of the hungry people ; hence, he says: "I have compassion on the multitude."

Let us imitate the example of our Lord, showing pity to our neighbor, and assisting him in all his necessities; for this is our duty,

I. *As men*, and, still more,

II. *As Christians*.

Allow me to direct your attention, to-day, to these two points.

I. God has given us a superabundance of temporal goods,

1. *Not for ourselves* ; but

2. *For our neighbor*.

1. This world is not designed by God to be our perpetual dwelling-place, but merely a place of probation and preparation for eternity. "Man shall go into the house of his eternity." (Ecclus. 12: 5.) "Here we have no permanent city" (Hebr. 13: 14); we are in the world like travellers in an inn. As a guest has no right to the goods of his host, so have we also, in virtue of our natural rights, no estate or property. "Woe to you that join house to house, and lay field to field, even to the end of the place ; shall you alone dwell in the midst of the earth ?" (Isai. 5: 8.) "Nature has bestowed all things in common," says St. Thomas of Villanova ; "the world is the inheritance of all mankind ;

through human laws, and by the rights of nations, were the first special possessions introduced." Thus we are bound by right to share with our neighbor the inheritance of nature, and the superfluities which we possess.

2. In natural rights we are all equal ; but the law of nations has made some rich and others poor. Hence, if any one has a superfluity, he is bound to aid his poorer neighbor. " Their abundance also may supply your want, that there may be an equality." (2 Cor. 8: 14.) " Thou givest the poor man," says St. Ambrose, " nothing that is thine, but only that which is his. For that which belongs to all, in common, thou canst not appropriate to thyself." The earth belongs to all, and not to the rich alone. " I have created thee," says God, according to the testimony of St. Augustine: " thou must thank me that thou livest, all that thou dost possess is my gift. But I have given thee an abundance in order that thou mayst be able to share with the poor ; I have not given to the poor, in order to try thee ; I might have made both of you equally rich ; but no ; through the poor thou must be tested." " Son, defraud not the poor of alms." (Ecclus. 4: 1.) If it is fraud, when a man withholds an alms to the poor out of his abundance, then one has no right to his abundance. St. Gregory exclaims : " We must admonish the rich that they are not lords, but only stewards of their temporal possessions ; they must, then, share with the lowly ; because that which they did distribute does not belong to them personally."

## II. *Christianity teaches us*

1. *That we must return to God the superfluous part of our possessions,*
2. *That we derive more profit than loss from so doing.*

1. He that gives an alms to a poor person, gives it to God. Our Redeemer himself teaches this : " Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me." (Matt. 25: 40.) St. Augustine makes the following commentary upon those words which our Saviour will address to the just on the Last Day—" I was hungry and you gave me to eat": " God willed to suffer hunger in the person of the poor, because he has his riches in heaven. Why do you hesitate, O man ! to give something to another, when you know that whatever you give to your neighbor, you give to Christ ? You give to him from whom you have received all that you possess." " The poor man stretches forth his hand," says St. Chrysostom, " and Christ receives the alms." On this account, the hand of the beggar has been called the coffer of Christ ; for what is given to the beggar is given to Christ. " Pay to the Lord your God : all you that round about him bring presents." (Ps. 75: 12.) But, how can man give them to God ? St. Ambrose answers : " Give them to God in the person of his poor."

2. Riches can be, in no way, more useful and profitable to us, than when we share them with the poor. This is a holy and lucrative usury, by which the gain is one hundred-fold greater than the principal. "Some distribute their own goods, and grow richer," says the wise Solomon. (Prov. 11: 24.) No capital is better invested than that which is given to the poor. For, "He that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord." (Prov. 19: 17.) "He that giveth to the poor, shall not want." (Prov. 28: 27.) "Let us then," says St. Augustine, "put our money out at interest, not with men, but with God. We then give it to him who is rich enough to give it all back to us; at the same time, we give him nothing but what he has already given to us. For these gifts, he promises, in return, to give us himself. If you love him, buy him thus from himself." If we do not do this, our wealth injures rather than benefits us; for we do not apply it to the end for which divine Providence bestowed it upon us. God might have created us all in affluence. "Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns: yet your heavenly Father feedeth them." (Matth. 6: 26.) He might also have fed man, without man's assistance; but the wisdom of God has so ordained that the poor shall not be deprived of the opportunity of practicing patience, nor the rich of the merit of showing mercy and charity.

Beloved Christians, when you see a crowd of poor people, say with our merciful Saviour: "I have compassion on the multitude; they have nothing to eat; but I will furnish them with bread." Often reflect upon those words of Christ: "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." (Matth. 5: 7.) "Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor: the Lord will deliver him in the evil day." (Ps. 40: 1.) It is your duty to give alms, both as men and Christians. But, perhaps you will say that you have nothing superfluous, and can give nothing to the poor out of your temporal goods; well, then, give them, at least, your good will. But if you have an abundance, then make a distinction even among the poor, and give rather to those who are ashamed to beg, before you give to those who publicly make known their wants. Never despise the condition of the poor, for, no matter how rich you may be in temporal goods you are still a beggar in the sight of God. When the time for prayer arrives, then it is clearly shown that you are a beggar. Do you not daily implore God for his gifts? Why is this, unless because you are needy and poor? I say still further, you ask for bread, yea, even for daily bread. Hence, as beggars you implore God to grant you your daily bread; and blessed are you if you thoroughly realize the beautiful significance of Christ's promise to his faithful ones: "Ask, and ye shall receive. Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Amen.

## SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## FREQUENT COMMUNION.

*"My heart is withered: because I forgot to eat my bread."* (Ps. 101 : 5.)

Every creature needs food for the preservation of its life, and expects it from the hand of God. "All expect of thee that thou give them food in season." (Ps. 103 : 27.) Man expects his food for body and soul from God. The most precious nourishment of the soul is the Holy Eucharist, the figure of which we see in the miraculous bread of the Gospel. "This is the bread descending down from heaven, that if any one eat of it, he may not die. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." (John 6 : 50, 52.) This bread is that food which contains in itself sweetness and power. It is not a merely transitory support and strength of our souls; but therein Jesus feeds and nourishes us with his own flesh and blood unto everlasting life: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me and I in him." (John 6 : 57.)

The most holy Sacrament of the Altar is therefore the principal object of our divine worship, and the religious life of a Christian is measured by his devotion and love for this treasure of our altars. He who has no desire for the Bread of Angels, who does not hunger and thirst for this heavenly food, has no religion and no love. That our love for this most holy Sacrament may be enkindled anew, I will furnish you with reasons why we should often receive holy Communion. These reasons are taken

- I. *From the designs of Jesus Christ in instituting this Sacrament,*
- II. *From the wants of our souls,*
- III. *From the example of the early Christians.*

I. "I have compassion on the multitude," says Jesus, "for behold, they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint in the way, for some of them came from afar off."—"I have compassion on the multitude," said Jesus when he looked down from heaven and saw mankind perishing of want and misery in the great desert of this mortal life, and, in accordance with the gracious councils of Wisdom and Love, he descended to earth and became incarnate, in order to give food to a hungry world. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." (John 1 : 14.)

But the God-Man could not always remain upon earth in human form. He was obliged to return to heaven. Again he was moved with the same tender compassion as the hour approached for his departure from their midst. With loving desire he sat with his disciples at the Last Supper, and his omniscient eye, penetrating the coming ages, beheld all those who should thereafter believe in him. He saw his Church pursuing her way through the stony and thorny desert of this life. He saw the powers of earth and the gates of hell rising up against her. He saw thousands of his children lying weak and exhausted on the roadside. What could they do without him? Must they not possess their Saviour and Redeemer in order to receive from his gracious presence and power the divine bread of their souls? Unless he abided with them, all the other graces would be imperfect and insufficient. Without the Real Presence the work of redemption would lack its glorious crown and accomplishment.

Full of unspeakable yearning and compassion, he established the holy Eucharist. Under the form of bread and wine, he became here below the food and nourishment of our souls. And he said to them: "With desire, I have desired to eat this pasch with you, before I suffer." (Luke 22 : 15.) "Take ye and eat: this is my body. Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for the remission of sins." (Matt. 26 : 26-28.)

Should we not give love for love, desire for desire? Will we not hasten to receive that compassionate Saviour who cries out to us: "Come to me all ye who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you?" Can you call yourselves the friends of Jesus, if you do not go often to see him, if you do not implore him to come frequently under your roof? No man can be thoroughly penetrated with the dignity and virtue of this divine food, if he lets an entire year pass without receiving it. Our Redeemer is consumed with a longing desire of our souls; must we, then, be driven to receive him only by the strict commandment of the Church?

How great was the love to Jesus, by which his friends were animated! Mary, the sister of Lazarus, rose in haste when she heard of the Lord's coming. She flew to him, she fell down before him, and adored him. Zaccheus descended from the fig-tree as soon as he heard Jesus was to enter his house, and he, the sinner, became a son of Abraham. All pious souls have ever felt themselves drawn, with inexpressible desire, towards this mystery, and towards this friend of their souls, and yet we remain cold and indifferent to him.

2. Examine closely into the essence of this food. Our Saviour dwells among us under the humble form of bread and wine, under the appearance of our common food and drink. The union between the food



and the body which it nourishes is the most intimate and inseparable that can be imagined. We *are* and *become* that which we eat and drink. Our Saviour wishes to form such an intimate union with our souls. Could he have shown his desire for us more plainly? What is bread? The food which is found everywhere, which is the nourishment of the rich and poor alike. Jesus wished to make himself the food and support of all men. Is it possible to express more glowingly his burning desire for our love? This bread, moreover, is a perpetual memorial of his sacred Passion. By it all the graces of redemption, all the blessings of Calvary are applied to our souls, "For as often as you shall eat this bread, and drink this chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord, until he come." (1 Cor. 11 : 26.) If we adore the love which Jesus showed on the cross by giving his life for his friends, "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends," (John 15 : 13,) let us reflect that his love in the blessed Eucharist is, so to say, a perpetual Passion and death for us.

If we were to hear of this blessed Sacrament for the first time on this day, how great would be our admiration, and how ardent our love? If we have no desire to receive this greatest treasure, we have reason to fear that the men of Nineve and the queen of Sheba will rise in judgment against us.

II. What are the great wants of the human soul? They seem to be as numerous as the sands of the seashore, the leaves of the forest. Every day brings its own special need, and every human heart has its own particular necessity. Truth to tell, we have all only one want. Only one thing is necessary. It is God the Everlasting, our eternal King and Spouse, for whom our hearts and souls are constantly crying out. If we possess God, we need nothing else. Shadows and illusions cannot satisfy the heart of man, truth and reality alone can satiate it. A God incarnate, an Immanuel in our hearts, to live and breathe in his eternal society and companionship—this is what our souls desire. This is the quintessence of religion. And the Holy Communion satisfies this one great want. It draws down the Eternal God into the human heart. The holy food strengthens and elevates the soul of man to an eternal and uninterrupted union with its God.

Herein is no question of the universal Presence which fills the heavens and the earth; it is a personal Christ who approaches our souls in this holy feast. We receive him upon our tongues, we hold him in our mouths, we feel him descend into our very bosoms. He lives in our souls, he permeates our thoughts, he flows through our blood. "Behold your privilege," exclaims St. Chrysostom, "see how your tongue and your lips have become the threshold over which Christ enters!" (Hom. 27 ad 1 Cor.) Since the day when Adam was expelled from Paradise, the one constant desire of man has been to ap-



proach his God, to look upon his face once more. This burning thirst was exemplified in the ancient Patriarchs and Prophets. Consumed by this desire, the people of Israel fulfilled all the commands given them by God, through his servant Moses. In this ardent and tormenting thirst after God, paganism solemnized the horrible mysteries of its diabolical worship. It endeavored to move the God-head, and draw him down to earth. And all the extravagances and fanaticisms of those outside of the Church of Christ, yea, even the desire of infidels to sink themselves in the bosom of Nature, what are they but the broken and despairing cries of the human heart for God? This longing is satiated in the Blessed Sacrament in the noblest and most natural manner, in a manner as tender as the majesty of God and the nature of man permit.

God descends into our hearts in the form of food, in order to elevate our souls and bodies to himself. The Holy Communion is the pledge to man of an inseparable union with God. This holy food strengthens our souls against the power of sin and temptation; it diminishes the fire of human passion: it moderates the force of sinful desires. It drives away Satan and destroys his authority over us. The holy body of Jesus Christ, the memorial of his Passion, the trophy of his victory over the devil, renders all the snares of the latter fruitless. As the Angel of Death once passed harmlessly over those houses which were signed with the blood of the paschal lamb, thus the wicked enemy flies from a soul that has received the Lamb of God, and still bears within its depths the visible traces of his gracious presence. The Lord of the Eucharist will say to the tempest, "Peace, be still," and all the storms of the human heart will straightway subside.

Have you, then, no desire or longing for God, your Saviour? Are you not impelled to approach him as frequently as possible in order to receive all graces for the salvation of your soul? "Why are ye careless," the venerable Jacob once said to his sons. "I have heard that wheat is sold in Egypt: go ye down and buy us necessities, that we may live and not be consumed with want." (Gen. 42:2.) Why do we delay to hasten to this holy supper? "All you that thirst," says the prophet, "come to the waters; and you that have no money, make haste, buy and eat: come ye, buy wine and milk without money, and without any price!" (Isai. 55:1.)

You say: "I have no time. It is not indifference or want of faith, but my business is so absorbing I cannot possibly go to the Sacraments oftener than once a year." But what is the one important and necessary business of life? Amid all our cares and labors to prepare our souls for their heavenly vocation. That is the only necessary business of the true Christian. The more numerous and pressing our toils and cares, the more is it our duty to remember the interior life. St. Francis

of Sales says: "Those who are engaged in many corporal labors must often renew their strength by nourishing aliment ; thus, those who are busy with many employments are greatly in need of the grace and power of this Sacrament."

But you tell me : " I am so unworthy—I fear to lose my reverence for this admirable mystery if I approach it frequently." Who is worthy to receive his God ? If we should give a whole lifetime to preparation we should still be unworthy to approach even once to this holy table. It is not in our power to prepare ourselves ; the grace of God alone can render us less unworthy. But it is certain that the less frequently we come to this Holy Sacrament the less worthy we shall be. Would you not be more pious, more fervent, if you received your God every month instead of approaching him once a year ? The fire of divine love is increased in the soul every time we communicate with proper dispositions. Alas ! many a lukewarm Christian might exclaim with David : " My heart is withered because I forgot to eat my bread."

III. The bad custom of approaching Holy Communion only once (or at most twice) a year was unknown to *the early Christians*. For hundreds of years, the Blessed Sacrament was the beginning and the end of the devotion of the faithful.

Of those three thousand, who received baptism on the feast of Pentecost, Holy Writ says that they persevered in the doctrine of the Apostles, " and in the communication of the breaking of bread." (Acts 2:42.) Thus, also, St. Paul wrote to the Christians, that they should daily assist at the Holy Sacrifice and the Holy Communion.

The holy Pope, Anacletus, speaks of the daily Communion of the faithful of his time. The first Christians, in times of persecution, were permitted to keep this Bread of the Strong in their dwellings, so that they might not hunger for it in vain, if prevented from attending the public assembly. St. Basil writes that in later centuries the faithful went to Communion four times a week. St. Epiphanius speaks of the Christians of his time receiving three times a week. St. Jerome records the same of the Spanish Church. St. Augustine informs us that, in his day, some of the faithful communicated daily ; others on certain days of the week ; and others, again, only on Sundays.

Only when the indifference of the faithful, in later centuries, increased, did our Holy Church (under compulsion, and with sighs) issue the commandment that every one must approach the Holy Communion at least once a year. . But the Fathers of the Council of Trent repeatedly say that they wish the faithful to receive the Blessed Sacrament every time they assist at Mass. The Church does not fix the precept of annual Communion, as the measure of our virtue and perfection, but rather as the utmost limit of our duty in that regard. What true lover of our Saviour would confine himself to simply drawing the

boundary-line between duty and sin? Shall we be thus mean and ungenerous in our dealings with him, who in this holy mystery has manifested toward us such an infinite excess of love and mercy?

In the early days of the Church, all without distinction of sex, who assisted at the Mass, received the Holy Communion. But how do matters stand with us now? Have not the men become colder and more indifferent than the women? Do we see many of our sex approaching the table of the Lord, outside of the Paschal season? O men and boys! blush for shame that we have been the first and the greater number to neglect the altars of the Lord! To our sex, did the Lord first give his holy flesh and blood; not to the pious women, not to his Blessed Virgin Mother, but to his Apostles. He preferred our sex, when he took upon himself the nature of man. Should we repay this honor by such black ingratitude? The desires of our hearts should all tend to a higher love and a more ardent zeal, in order, by the power of our example, to increase the love and devotion of all to the Most Blessed Sacrament.

In conclusion, I wish to place before your consideration another truth that may strengthen the good dispositions and resolutions of your hearts. We all travel upon insecure ways, and, at any moment, the abyss of death may open to swallow us up. "Forsake me not, Lord Jesus Christ! if this night is to be my last!" daily implores the pious Christian, at his evening prayers. How terrified are we when we hear that the cold hand of death has suddenly snatched away a brother from our midst! Do we not ask at once whether he had time to receive the last Sacraments? Are we not terrified when we hear, (as we frequently do,) that he died before the priest could reach him. But does not our terror change into horror, when, upon further questioning, we learn that the deceased had not approached the Sacraments for almost a whole year! Have we not greater cause for our pain and grief? Sudden death loses most of its terrors for those who approach frequently during the year to receive this pledge of eternal life.

Therefore, let there be no tepidity or idleness in the matter of eternal salvation. Let us eat often of this bread of heaven, so that we may not perish upon the journey to our true Fatherland, but that supported and strengthened by it, we may ascend, with Elias, to the holy mountain of God! Amen.

BISHOP EHRLER.

## SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## HYPOCRISY.

*“Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Matth. 7 : 21.)*

O Just God ! are good works not always good works and acceptable to thee at all times? Have pious and holy people not always true piety and sanctity? No ! our Redeemer says : “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly, they are ravenous wolves.” The tree is known, not by its leaves or blossoms, but by its fruits ; and a man’s true piety is shown, not by the multitude of his prayers, nor by fair exterior devotions, but by the good works which accompany a truly upright life. “Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” It is true that it is written : “The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him” ; but the psalmist adds “to all that call upon him *in truth.*” (Ps. 144 : 18.) Which means, according to St. Anselm, to all those who are his faithful servants by keeping his commandments. If they do not do this, they are hypocrites. To-day, I propose to show you the wretched condition of such people, and to point out to you

I. *Their real character, and*

II. *Their unhappy blindness,*

that you may be able, in the future, to distinguish the real from the apparent, solid virtue from false ; and obtain a just horror and hatred of this most detestable vice.

I. Hypocrites are generally,

1. *Singular in their choice of devotions, and*
2. *Vain-glorious in their purposes.*

1. The good works of these apparent devotees are generally those of their own choice, which they perform with the greatest strictness, while, on the other hand, they either neglect altogether the obligatory duties of religion or of their state of life, or, at the best, perform them

very negligently. If, for example, they omit the prayers or pious practices enjoined by the manifold confraternities to which they belong, they are much disturbed in their conscience; while, on the contrary, the penitential prayers or practices imposed by their confessor, they either postpone indefinitely or perform with tepidity and disgust. They voluntarily inflict upon themselves certain unusual austerities, such as scourging themselves to blood, wearing hair shirts, and so on; but the precepts of the Church concerning penance, and even the commandments of God, they keep according to their own good pleasure, observing them unwillingly, or, at least, with less zeal than they bestow upon the works of their own choice. Thus, while they avoid trifling sins with great exactness they commit greater ones without scruple. They resemble the Pharisees, of whom our Lord said: "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. . . . Who strain out a gnat, and swallow a camel." (Matth. 23 : 23, 24.) They judge their neighbors rashly; they suspect them censoriously, they appear, in fact, to have a special mission to reform others, while they neglect their own souls. Hence, it is, that they become very keensighted to discover the smallest defect in their neighbor, and are criminally blind to their own greater sins. "Thou hypocrite, first cast the beam out of thy own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to take out the mote from thy brother's eye." (Luke 6 : 42.)

2. "By their fruits you shall know them." (Matth. 7 : 16.) The intentions of such false Christians not being holy, but rather vain, their spurious motives unconsciously betray themselves to others, if not to the hypocrites themselves. This is apparent in the contemptuous opinion which the latter frequently express of themselves, but which, if repeated by another, would arouse them to fierce indignation. Such a man says: "I am a sinner; yea, the greatest of sinners," but if any of his listeners agree with him, or, say as much of him in his presence, he angrily contradicts him. These people have no desire to be believed, when they thus openly abase themselves; their garb of penitence and humility is merely assumed for a purpose. Vain-glory lightens all the burdens they appear to bear, and since their intention is not to possess true sanctity, but only the appearance thereof, they are unmerciful in their exactions of others. "They bind heavy and insupportable burdens and lay them on men's shoulders; but with a finger of their own they will not move them." (Matth. 23 : 4.) But, by their fruits we may know them. If we examine their interior, as well as their exterior dispositions, we shall find that they are not really humble, but wise in their own conceits. They are full of self-love, and devoted to certain bad habits—yes, very often they are "whited sepulchres full of dead men's bones, and all rottenness."



II. Alas ! how blind and foolish are such people ! For all their apparent good works they receive

1. *No recompense*; but rather,
2. *Severe punishment*.

1. "The hope of the hypocrite shall perish," says holy Job. (Job 8 : 13.) Their reward corresponds with their labor. "They shall sow wind, and reap a whirlwind : there is no standing stalk in it." (Osee 8 : 7.) They toil in vain. Their good works avail them nothing, because, the interior intention being corrupted, they have not labored for an eternal reward. They are more desirous of appearing holy in the eyes of men, than in the sight of God. Their desires are gratified ; and they have their reward in this world. "But," as St. Augustine observes, "they receive *their* reward, but not the reward of God." They have practised virtue in order to be praised by men ; they are praised by men ; thus, they have received their recompense in this world, and can look for no further reward. Fools ! we may, in truth, apply to you the words of the prophet : "You have sowed much, and brought in little ; have eaten, but have not had enough ; you have drunk, but you have not been filled with drink ; you have clothed yourselves, but have not been warmed ; and he that hath earned wages, put them into a bag with holes." (Agg. 1 : 6.)

2. The folly of the hypocrite appears still more plainly when we consider that not only shall he not be rewarded in the world to come, but, on the contrary, that he shall be punished. "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites !" says our Saviour himself ; and against no other kind of sin did he pronounce as severe or as impressive threats, as against that of hypocrisy. "You serpents, generation of vipers, how will you escape the judgment of hell?" (Matth. 23 : 33.) "Every tree that yieldeth not good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire." (Matth. 7 : 19.) "Then, tremble, ye hypocrites !" says St. Bernard, "you who are unfruitful trees." "Which of you can dwell with devouring fire ? Which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isai. 33 : 14) asks the prophet Isaïas, having previously remarked : "Trembling hath seized upon the hypocrites." O folly ! "The praise of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment." (Job 20 : 53.) At last the time comes when "in a moment they go down to hell." (Job 21 : 13.)

"I beseech you, therefore, my brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, your reasonable service." (Rom. 12 : 1.) The sacrifice of the hypocrite is not pleasing to God ; his service is not reasonable ; he labors in vain, he is deserving of punishment instead of reward. "All the



glory of the king's daughter is within"; (Ps. 44 : 14) but you, hypocrites, as I have said before, "you are like to whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all filthiness." (Matth. 23 : 27.) "All their works they do for to be seen of men." "They loved him with their mouth ; . . . but their heart was not right with him." (Ps. 77 : 36, 37.) "Having an appearance, indeed, of piety, but denying the power thereof." (2 Tim. 3 : 5.) "I know thy works, that thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead." (Apoc. 3 : 1.) "Wash thy heart from all wickedness." (Jerem. 4 : 14.) If your hearts and your intentions are pure, then your works are pleasing to God. Endeavor to be truly that which externally you wish to appear : for, to seem holy before men, and not to be really holy in God's sight, is the cause of the condemnation of the hypocrite.

B.

## SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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MODERN PROGRESS, THE FALSE PROPHET OF OUR TIME.

*"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. By their fruits you shall know them."* (Matth. 7 : 15, 16.)

Prophets of truth and of falsehood, teachers of light and of darkness, have at all times stood opposed to each other. Upon one side we see God, the eternal Source of all truth, and his Son Jesus Christ, whom he has sent, the Apostles and disciples of our Lord, together with all good men; on the other side, we behold Satan and his hosts of wicked spirits, and all the bad men who have announced and preached false doctrines. Both kingdoms advance in close ranks and contend together for the possession of man's heart. Woe to man who does not discriminate between the true and the false prophets! His end will be misery and eternal ruin. Many are the false prophets of the present day. Propagators of lies, deceits, they have set up their pulpits on every side,—in the temples of the Lord, in the homes of men, as well as in the workshops and market-places. They teach by word and example. They preach through the press, from the daily newspaper up to the abstruse works of so-called science. Verily, in these, our days, the words of our Saviour have a peculiar and striking significance: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. By their fruits you shall know them."

The most dangerous of all false prophets is the spirit of the age,—the spirit of *Progress*. What confusion to the mind, what ruin to the soul are embodied in that one idea of modern progress! It is reckoned the chief good of state and people. Myriads turn their backs upon the Church and its doctrines, because they believe it to be inimical to progress. Yet, if you question the individual what he means by this word, and whether the Church of Christ is really an enemy to progress, you will receive either a very unsatisfactory answer, or else none at all. A false prophet, in the shape of an idea, has confused his intellect.

Let us occupy ourselves, to-day, with this idea of Progress—this great false prophet of our times. Let us ask ourselves:

I. *Is there such a thing as progress?*

II. *If so, where do we find it?* and

III. *What do we hold concerning the progress of our day.*

I. There must be progress in the life of individuals as well as in that of nations. Otherwise, the idea and the watch-word of progress would fail to inspire and govern thousands. Falsehood has never such power over man. It must clothe itself in the garments of truth, if it would mislead and overcome him. The universal and boisterous cry for progress, and the magic of this word for man, prove that it must contain a certain amount of truth. We are indeed—nations as well as individuals—created for progress.

1. Every human life is an effort and a movement towards a certain aim. Life means growth—blossom and fruit—an unfolding of powers and faculties. Death alone is rest and cessation. In all nature, we behold life and progress. In eternal progress the stars hasten on in the orbits ordained for them by the Creator. In everlasting progress, the earth constantly brings forth its fruits; and every being that comes forth from the womb of nature, has its appointed circuit, in which it revolves, until it has accomplished the end of its being. Even the senseless stone, the dead metal, which seem to sleep in subterranean mines, are not excluded from life and progress. It is the breath of God, which pervades the universe, constantly producing therein newer and more beautiful forms.

The corporal, as well as the spiritual life of man must also, according to the will of God, progress and perfect itself. But while the life of nature is confined within certain unalterable limits, the progress of the spirit is boundless. It is a progress from earth to heaven. The everlasting existence of God, alone, can set a limit to the march of the immortal soul.

2. To this natural progress, is added that of the grace of God, which elevates us to an unimaginable height of grandeur and holiness. A superhuman and supernatural sanctity, a heavenly progress of our being and life, is its great law, aim, and end. "Be you, therefore, perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect," (Matth. 5 : 48) says our Saviour to us through his holy Church.

O, the children of men cry out for progress; and, when they have made one little step forward in material affairs, they triumphantly exclaim: "See how far we have already gone! Behold what a victory human reason has attained!" They accuse the Church of tending backwards. That great Mother, however, replies to them: "You are born to go onward and upward,—to become Saints, yea, to become like to God himself!" Are we, as Catholics, then, the enemies and opponents of progress? Nay, rather, we are always its most faithful friends and promoters. We teach the world to advance in every department of life, in art and science, in commerce and industry; and

above and beyond the mere cycle of material progress, we seek "to put on the new man, who, according to God, is created in justice, and holiness of truth." (Ephes. 4 : 24.) "Till we all meet in the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ." (Ephes. 4 : 13.)

3. It is not a mere matter of option, whether, or not, a Christian shall endeavor to reach the height of perfection, but we must go forward if we would follow our divine Master up the steep ascent of Calvary. Herein lies the great difference between man and irrational creatures. In the world of physical life no retrograde movement is possible. The plant remains always a plant ; the metal remains ever the same metal, for they are bound to their state by an unalterable law of the Lord. But the man who does not progress towards perfection, must retrograde and sink lower than the beasts. Not to go forward in the spiritual life is to go backward. Hence, in progress, we recognize a holy duty, a command of the Creator, entailing upon us a strict responsibility.

4. As with the individual, so with the whole body of human society. Even kingdoms and nations must grow, in order to approach more closely to the great and noble aims of life. According to God's will, mankind is as a mighty tree, planted by his divine hand, in order to grow upwards, and ever putting forth new leaves and blossoms, till, at last, rich in fruits, it reaches to the heavens and stands before the face of the Almighty.

This is the true idea of progress, which we favor. We are not opposed to progress even in material affairs. But, higher than the highest earthly advancement, higher than railroads and telegraphs, than rifled cannon and steam-engines, higher than the most flourishing trades and industries, do we place the spiritual and moral progress of the human race. When men, blinded by the earth earthy, make material progress the aim and object of life, then we call out to them : A higher and nobler progress is appointed for you ! You are born to progress upwards to the likeness of God, to become Saints of heaven ! "But one thing is necessary," (Luke 10:42) says our Lord. The world may reproach us with favoring a retrogressive civilization, but thereby it proves to us that it has lost the true idea of progress. Notwithstanding the opposition of the world, we will hold fast to that progress which is approved of by our holy faith, being certain that it will lead us to the heights of heavenly bliss.

II. *Where do we find true progress ?* I answer : Real human advancement is found only in the Church of Jesus Christ. That City of God

is set upon the very apex of progress. From the day when Christianity appeared in the world, to urge it onward and upward from the degrading retrocession of paganism, the history of human progress commenced. All the efforts of the nations of ancient times were, it is true, powerful strides towards the light ; but, with St. Augustine, we may say, they were strides outside of the right path, vain and fruitless in their results.

Christianity has taught the world in what real progress consists, *viz.*—that men must strive to grow into a likeness to God, to become Children of God and Saints of heaven. In Jesus Christ, the last end of humanity took visible form upon earth. He was, therefore, the leader of the highest progress, who descended from heaven for our instruction.

But, we have not been merely instructed in the meaning of true progress, but by the graces which Christ brought down from heaven, and dispensed to us through the ministry of his Church, the whole world has been leavened and inspired to true progress.

Every man must be considered in his three-fold relations : as an individual, as a member of a family, as a citizen of the country in which he lives. All real progress must include these three sides of man's life, and must elevate him to happiness in these three-fold relations. Christianity has done this. Through her doctrines and truths as well as by her graces, consolations, and promises, she has penetrated and consecrated individual life, family life, and civil life, and has thus led on the whole human race towards progress.

1. Where else does man find the want of his nature perfectly satisfied, except in the doctrines of our holy Church? Where does he find peace of heart and happiness of soul except in the practice of those virtues which the Church recommends to him? She exhorts us to the practice of temperance, purity, and self-command, to the love of God and of the neighbor, to those higher virtues of humility and meekness of heart, which constitute the real happiness of life. She invites us to make always greater progress in these virtues, so that we may more closely resemble the Only-begotten Son of God. Into the one who halts or hesitates in the path of virtue, she infuses new strength through her graces and promises. She calls out to us : " Rejoice, and be exceeding glad ; because your reward is very great in heaven ! " (Matth. 5 : 12.) She reminds us of the fire that never quenches, of the worm that never dies, so that both by promises and threats, we may be encouraged to ascend the steep path of Christian perfection.

Could there be a nobler aim than that which our Church points out to us? Are not the Saints who have so closely imitated the example



and virtues of Christ, the most perfect and most advanced of all mankind? Do they not stand upon the true summit of human life, and are we not all invited to follow in their footsteps?

2. Christianity has sanctified man in his family life, and thus advanced his true progress. It has elevated woman from the degrading slavery in which she languished. Christianity teaches the married couple mutual love and fidelity, a burning zeal for the education of their children, a tender care for the salvation of their dependents. The Church exhorts children to show obedience, reverence, and love to their parents, saying to them: "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is pleasing to the Lord!" (Col. 3: 20.) Christianity has abrogated slavery. It demands of the servant fidelity, attachment, and industrious service to his master. "Servants, obey your carnal masters . . . as Christ!" (Eph. 6: 5.) It makes the school the assistant of the parents, to continue and complete the education of their children. It pours its spirit into the schools, that therein the cultivation of the intellect may be accompanied, nay anticipated, by the still more important Christian training of the heart and soul, making the child a veritable heir of heaven. If every family possessed this living spirit of Christ; if every household resembled the holy family at Nazareth, the progress of the human race would be most beautifully and harmoniously complete.

3. Again; as to civil life,—as it was our holy Church that raised up man to his true dignity; as it was she who delivered the family from the degradation of paganism by the sanctity and indissolubility of the marriage-tie; she it was, also, who ennobled and elevated humanity in the paths of public life. Christianity broke down the autocracy and arbitrary power of the heathen tyrants. It says to every king and ruler of the earth what Christ said of old to Pilate: "Thou shouldst not have any power. . . unless it were given thee from above" (John 19: 11); and it directs their attention to the Supreme Lord from whom they have received crown and sceptre, and to whom they must give an account of their stewardship, equally with the lowest and poorest of their people. The Church also demands of subjects obedience to the laws of the land, and counsels them to render unto Cæsar what belongs to Cæsar, and to God what belongs to God. She imposes upon every individual citizen those duties of justice, love, and mercy, which should adorn human society.

The history of Christianity is, therefore, the history of human progress. The more the world falls away from the truths and doctrines of Christianity and withdraws itself from the beneficent influence of our holy Church, the more it will retrograde towards paganism and destruction.



III. Upon these grounds, we are the open enemies of modern progress, and we must continue to be such. Its ultimate aim is the denial, the hatred, and destruction of Christian truth. All the efforts of its so-called leaders are directed to the extinguishing of Christian ideas as illustrated in the life of the individual of the family, and of the state; and to depriving the Church of all its influence on human society. I know, indeed, that modern progress has many illusions for its votaries. Not all who favor progress are aware of, or wish for, the ruinous results it entails. I speak, therefore, of that progress which shows itself in the general aspect, intentions, views, and desires of the majority of men. We openly declare that we are opposed to such, because we see in it no progress, but a relapse into a debasing and ruinous paganism.

Examine in detail these demands of modern progress, and you will understand that, viewing them from a Christian stand-point, we must necessarily oppose them as fraught with the greatest danger to human society and the most subtle obstacles to real progress. What, above all, does modern progress demand of our holy Church? What does it teach and demand of man in his relations to himself, to the family and to the state?

1. Progress demands of the Church of Christ that she alter her doctrines, her commands, and her whole inner and outer life, to suit the spirit of the age. Progress speaks contemptuously of the dry, dead dogmas and doctrines, of the exaggerated and unreasonable exactions of our holy Church. It cries out against priestcraft and Papal Supremacy. Above all, it protests, the Church must cease to be *Roman*. Her form of worship, and her use of the Latin tongue must be changed. Auricular confession, and the unnatural celibacy of the clergy, must alike be abolished. In short, each one, according to his own fancy, makes a new protest against the Church.

Can the Church comply with these demands of modern progress? Impossible! Otherwise, she would prove herself unfaithful to her divine mission. "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," (Matth. 28: 20) said our Lord to his Apostles. The revelation of Jesus Christ must be preserved pure and intact amid the changing opinions of men; and must be announced to the world by the Church until the end of time. "Keep that which is committed to thy trust," says St. Paul to Timothy, "avoiding the profane novelties of words, and oppositions of knowledge falsely so-called, which some promising, have erred concerning the faith." (1 Tim. 6: 20, 21.) For "though we, or an Angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you beside that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema," says the same holy Apostle. (Gal. 1: 8.) If, at any time, a con-

tradition should arise between the spirit of the Gospel and that of the times, the latter must always yield to the former, for the infallible word of God cannot be changed to suit the fallible views of man.

2. Modern progress charges the Church with directing man's attention wholly to the supernatural. It complains that we rob man of the joys of this life whilst we feed him with fallacious hopes of the life to come. It argues that to improve the condition of this world is better and more pleasing to God than to make efforts for the attainment of virtue. Therefore, it requires man to make this world the centre of his hopes and labors.

But is this lawful for us? As long as there is an eternity, to which this life is only the entrance, so long will the words of Christ have weight: "Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God, and his justice; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matth. 6:33.) We are not opposed to earthly progress and material prosperity; but we are firmly convinced that the nations can never reach true and lasting happiness without virtue and Christian piety. Virtue is the root of all earthly success and prosperity. We were not created to accumulate earthly riches, and to enjoy them, but, as the Catechism tells us, "to know, love and serve God here below, and hereafter to see and enjoy him forever in heaven." If modern progress accuses us of deluding man with promises of a blissful hereafter, let it (and the world) furnish to the sad and suffering a better and more assured consolation! We have yet to hear of such a consolation!

3. Civil marriage and non-sectarian schools—these are two engines whereby modern progress seeks to weaken or destroy the influence of the Church in human affairs. Marriage must lose its high, sacramental character, and be degraded to a mere civil contract, which can be dissolved at pleasure. The children must hear as little as possible of religion in the schools. Especially, all disputed points of doctrine between different denominations must be avoided, so that religious harmony may be secured. Modern progress wishes that the state should cease to be Christian, and that it should no longer protect religion. That which is determined by a majority of the representatives of the people, shall be the law, even in religious matters, for the whole nation. To the popular will, says progress, both throne and altar must bow.

But what will be the result of all this in the family, in the state? What will ensue if the Church is no longer permitted to pour out the blessing of heaven upon human society? A coming generation without faith or morals. The altars of God once cast into the dust, the thrones of kings and the chairs of rulers will be destroyed and per-

manent anarchy inaugurated. Politics, without Christianity, has written its bloody record upon the barricades and guillotines of revolutionary France. Knowledge, without religion, leads to the denial of God ; and industry, without Christianity, means the absolute impoverishment of the masses. Give us progress indeed, but let it be progress founded upon the principles of Christianity. We are the implacable enemies of any other. Let railroads encircle the globe with a network of iron, let telegraph wires stretch away even to the smallest villages, and trade and commerce bring to every port the products of the universe, mankind, without Christian sentiment and practices, will be utterly miserable and unhappy. Humanity, gasping and powerless, must seek true progress at the door, and on the altars, of the Church ; and there like the Prodigal Son, stretching forth imploring hands, it must beg of God the Father, the efficacious help which he, alone, can give. Amen.

BISHOP EHRLER.

## EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## SLOTH.

*"The steward said within himself: What shall I do; for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship? To dig I am not able: to beg I am ashamed."* (Luke 16 : 3.)

Behold in the unjust steward the evil effects of idleness! When a man gives himself wholly up to this vice, work becomes an insupportable burden, yet at the same time, shame deters him from begging for his daily bread. The steward mentioned in to-day's Gospel, had not performed his duty honestly. He had been negligent in the administration of his office; and now, as his master was about to inquire into his accounts, he foresaw that their discrepancies would cost him his position. Therefore, he said to himself: "What shall I do?"

We are all stewards, my brethren, while we remain in this world. The gifts of nature and grace which we possess do not belong to us, but to our divine Lord and Master. "What hast thou," O man! "that thou hast not received?" (1 Cor. 4 : 7.) As we have received all our goods and gifts from God, so we must give a strict account of them to him. Woe to us, if we have been negligent in our stewardship! For,

I. *It is our duty to labor, and*

II. *We are fools if we do not work.*

I. The obligation to labor is a duty which we owe,

1. *To God; and*

2. *To ourselves.*

1. God has created us for no other end than to serve him. Thus, from the moment of our birth, we are his servants. We shall, one day, be called to a strict account of our service; and then, the Heavenly Master will address us, either in the following words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord;" or he will say to us: "Thou evil and slothful servant, . . . thou oughtest to have committed my money to the bankers"; and because thou hast not done this, "Let the unprofitable servant be cast into exterior darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matth. 25 : 21 ; 26 : 30.) Our Lord compares himself to a man who, being about to travel into a far-distant country, "called his servants,

and delivered to them his goods. And to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, to every one according to his proper ability. Do not forget, my dear Christians, that those among you who have received much will have much to answer for. It is not enough that we preserve the talents given us, it is our duty, also, to increase them. The Lord, in the day of reckoning, will not be satisfied merely with the return of the talents intrusted to our care ; he will, also, demand that which has been gained "over and above." "At my coming I should have received my own with usury," said he to the slothful servant. It is not enough to avoid evil, we must also *do good*, if we would not be deserving of punishment. "If you have a servant," says St. Chrysostom, "who, although not a drunkard or a thief, is an idler, who neglects your work, do you not chastise him as severely for doing nothing, as for doing evil?" The fig-tree did not produce bad fruit, but simply none at all : nevertheless the order was given to the servant : "Cut it down ; why doth it take up the ground?" (Luke 13 : 7.)

2. Man is in duty bound to labor, not only because God commands it, but also, *for his own sake*. His nature and his present condition both require of him to labor. "Man is born to labor, and the bird to fly." (Job 5 : 7.) "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." (Gen. 3 : 19.) "If any man will not work, neither let him eat," says the Apostle ; and to the Corinthians he wrote : "Even unto this hour, we both hunger and thirst. . . . and we labor, working with our own hands." (1. Cor. 4 : 11, 12.) He entreats the Thessalonians to labor, saying : "We entreat you, brethren ; . . . that you do your own business, and work with your own hands, as we command you." (1. Thess. 4 : 10, 11.) The great Apostle knew very well the saying of the Wise Man : "Idleness hath taught much evil." (Ecclus. 33 : 29.) We have many sorrowful examples of this truth. "They are not in the labor of men ; . . . therefore pride hath held them fast." (Ps. 72 : 5, 6.) "Behold this was the iniquity of Sodom, thy sister, pride, fulness of head, and abundance, and the idleness of her and of her daughters." (Ezech. 16 : 49.) As man is bound to strive after evangelical perfection, so is he obliged to avoid idleness, as the greatest obstacle to that perfection.

II. "He who gives himself up to idleness acts very foolishly," says the Wise Man. And why ?

1. *He will not work now, when he can, and*
2. *He will not wish to work, after a while, when he will not be able.*

1. The folly of the idler consists in this, that he wastes time, which is very precious and very short. Again, it is folly to increase his

indebtedness to God instead of striving to cancel it, as it is written : " Pay what thou owest." (Matth. 18 : 28.) Thirdly, it is folly to bring in no fruit, when he might acquire great treasures of merits, " I have chosen you, and have appointed you, that you should go, and should bring forth fruit, and your fruit should remain." (John 15 : 16.) Fourthly, it is great folly to wish to rest in this world, which is a place of labor. " Labor as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," are the words of the Apostle. " See, therefore, brethren, how you walk circumspectly : not as unwise, but as wise : redeeming the time." (Ephes. 5 : 15, 16.) " Whilst we have time, let us do good to all men." (Gal. 6 : 10.) " The days of man are short, and the number of his months is with thee : thou hast appointed his bounds which can not be passed." (Job 14 : 5.) " Behold, now is the acceptable time : behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. 6 : 2.) *Now!* *Now!* you know not how long you have still to live. " It is not for you to know the times or moments, which the Father hath put in his own power." (Acts 1 : 7.) " Behold now, you who say : To-day or to-morrow, we will go into such a city ; and there we will spend a year, and will traffick and make gain : whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life ? It is a vapor, which appeareth for a little while, and afterwards, shall vanish away." (James 4 : 13, 14, 15.) Labor then, now, while you are able, so that you may not be numbered among those unfortunates of whom holy Job speaks : " They spend their days in wealth," they labor not, they stand idle, and—what happens ? " In a moment they go down to hell." (Job 21 : 13.) O, what blindness !

2. If we will not labor now, there will come a time when we would gladly work, but when we shall not be able to do so. " Time shall be no more." (Apoc. 10 : 6.) " The night cometh, when no man can work." (John 9 : 4.) And why ? Because the end of life and the hour of death will most certainly come. That shall be no longer a time of labor, but a time of reckoning. Man is so foolish that he will not do good until death has robbed him of the time and opportunity of doing it. God will call you to judgment, saying : " Give an account of thy stewardship." Will not these words resound like a thunder-clap in your ears ? Will you not then ask yourself : " What shall I do ? " There is no more time for labor and toil. " The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." (Jerem. 8 : 20.) " What shall I do ? " Alas ! dear friends, then, instead of crying out : " What shall I do ? " you might more correctly ask yourself : "*What should I have done ?*" The time of labor will then be no more, and there will remain only the time of reward or punishment. You will be no longer on the journey, but already at the goal. Then the tree can not produce any more fruit. It must be cut down by its Owner's com-



mand ; and will remain on whatever side it may fall. Now, however, there is still time for good works ; now, you may profitably ask yourselves : " What shall I do ? " And the Wise Man promptly answers your question : " Go to the ant, O sluggard, and consider her ways, and learn wisdom ; which although she hath no guide, nor master, nor captain, provideth her meat for herself in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." (Prov. 6 : 6-8.) " Before thy death work justice : for in hell there is no finding food." (Ecclus. 14 : 17.) Woe to you, if you neglect now to make provision for the future!

Let us, then, labor, my dearly beloved, while there is time ! We simply do our duty by laboring ; we act like fools when we do not work. You are God's servants, not only because he created you, but, much more, because " You are bought with a great price " ; (1 Cor. 6 : 20) with nothing less than the blood of his only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. And why should work seem hard to you ? Our Saviour himself said : " I must work the works of him that sent me, whilst it is day." (John 9 : 4.) Yet you, who were born to labor, are not willing to work ! " The disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord. (Matth. 10 : 24.) " Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly ; for neither work, nor reason, nor wisdom, nor knowledge, shall be in hell, whither thou art hastening." (Ecclus. 9 : 10.) " And the Lord commended the unjust steward, forasmuch as he had done wisely, for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." (Luke 16 : 8.) Thomas à Kempis says : " For a small living, men run a great way ; for eternal life, many will scarce move a single foot from the ground. The world promises things temporal, and of small value, and is served with great eagerness ; I (that is Christ) promise things most excellent, and everlasting, and men's hearts are not moved." We apply all our energies, from our youth up, to secure a support for our old age. " Shame upon us ! " says St. Bernard, " that the miserable children of this world should strive more earnestly for that which is injurious than we do for that which is profitable." They hasten with more alacrity towards death, than we do towards Life. O, my Lord and my God ! Is it then possible that the children of darkness act more reasonably and wisely, in their pursuit of the transitory riches and honors of this world, than we do, in our search for thee, our Only Good ? Enlighten our darkness, we beseech thee, and reform our judgments that we may labor faithfully in thy service, and merit, at last, thine everlasting reward ! Amen.

B.

## EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## THE CHILDREN OF THIS WORLD AND THE CHILDREN OF LIGHT.

*“And the Lord commended the unjust steward, forasmuch as he had done wisely : for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.”* (Luke 16 : 8.)

We cannot possibly admit that our Saviour intended to approve of the injustice and treachery practiced by the steward mentioned in to-day's Gospel. “For the Lord is just, and hath loved justice : his countenance hath beheld righteousness.” (Ps. 10 : 8.) He only praised the prudence of the steward, and by this parable, he implies that he wishes us to imitate in spiritual matters the wisdom of the children of this world. “The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.”

In order to better understand this point, let us inquire first : Who are the children of this world ? Who are the children of light ? The children of this *world* are simply those who strive for and love the goods and pleasures of this life, and who hope to find, in their possession, the highest aim of existence. The children of *light*, on the contrary, are those who walk in the higher light shed upon their lives by holy faith ; and who, despising the sinful glitter of the world, aspire after purer and nobler delights, of which they have a foretaste even here below.

We should all be children of light, not children of the world, inasmuch as we have been redeemed from the bondage of sin and Satan, not by gold or silver, but by the precious blood of the Immaculate Lamb Jesus Christ. “Love not the world, nor those things which are in the world,” exclaimed the warning voice of St. John. “If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him : for all that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life : which is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof. But he that doeth the will of God, abideth forever.” (1 John 2 : 15-17.)

But, in spite of all these warnings, and notwithstanding our Christian vocation, the children of the world have always far outnumbered the children of light. Earthly goods and pleasure are always more attractive to the human heart, than the higher spiritual ones of faith.

The children of light remain children, to the end, but the children of the world soon grow into men. If the former were as wise and

courageous for the acquisition of supernatural goods, as their opponents are for material ones, their victory would be a glorious one for the cause of God and truth.

That this truth may be deeply impressed upon every human soul, our Saviour desires his disciples to imitate the wisdom of the children of this world; for the latter, as personified by the unjust steward of the Gospel, commonly act

I. *With great intelligence and capacity;*

II. *With great effort and toil; and*

III. *With great prudence and circumspection.*

I. Consider the candor wherewith the unjust steward states his difficult situation. "What shall I do; for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship? To dig I am not able: to beg I am ashamed. I know what I will do," he says. He makes no secret of his dishonest intentions. He is animated by a single idea; he must secure a comfortable living for himself in lieu of the past he has forfeited by fraud and speculation. Every other consideration must yield to this paramount idea.

1. Behold here a perfect picture of a child of this world! The children of this world all know what they want: to possess and enjoy the goods of this world. This, to them, is the only and highest aim of life. Either their faith in another life is entirely lost, or else lies dormant in their hearts as a dead, fruitless seed. All their thoughts and efforts are concentrated on earthly goods, honors, and pleasures. They shrink from no means, whether just or unjust, which will help them to attain their object.

The proud man thirsts ever for fresh honors. Every event of life is as a new round in the ladder whereby he hopes to ascend to future greatness. He is always ready to say, "*I know what I will do*," in order to reach his goal. The avaricious man hungers after riches, and he, also, says: "*I know what I will do*." He does not hesitate at injustice or falsehood, yea, even robbery or murder, if these are necessary for the gaining of his object. The voluptuary seeks everywhere an opportunity and a victim for his lust, and he also says: "*I know what I will do*." The children of this world all know what they want. Their watchword is: Man is born for the enjoyment of the good things of this life.

This earth is no valley of tears (they say). We are no wandering exiles with our gaze fixed upon a future existence of doubtful, if not impossible, felicity. We are very well contented with the present life.

There are gold and gems, there are honors and pleasures, for all who are capable of grasping them. With the same candor and publicity they seek to disseminate abroad their false and impious principles.

2. If we, children of light, only understood and proclaimed the principles of Christianity, if we only knew the aim of our lives as well as the children of this world know theirs, how rich would we become in true, heavenly goods! How would the Christian idea conquer the world! But do we not deserve the reproach which the prophet Elias once addressed to the Israelites, when they wavered between him, the prophet of the living God, and the priests of Baal? "How long do you halt between two sides?" cried he.—"If the Lord be God, follow him, but if Baal, then follow him. And the people did not answer him a word." (3 Kings 18 : 21.) How many of those who should be children of light, either wholly deny the one aim and object of their lives; or fluctuate between heaven and earth, having one eye directed to the joys of this world, while the other contemplates the goods of eternity. They hesitate between Christ and the world. "They are a nation without counsel, and without wisdom." (Deut. 52 : 28.) They do not know what they want. How can we as Christians ever reach the aim of our existence, if our last end is not constantly before our eyes, if we do not utilize every lawful means that can help us to gain our end? "The light of thy body is thy eye. If thy eye be simple, thy whole body will be lightsome. But if thy eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darksome. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great will the darkness itself be?" (Matth. 6 : 22-23.)

The Lord has not said to us; Be rich, or be satisfied upon earth, and enjoy, without care, the pleasures of life! But on the contrary, he has said to us: Be virtuous, and endeavor through the thorns of life as well as through its roses, to approach always nearer to your eternal aim, and gain the commendation of your God and Maker! We must be able to say with the steward of the parable, "*I know what I will do!*" We must clearly and boldly proclaim our Christian principles, both by word and action. A truth, or an idea, proclaimed distinctly, and known and defended by thousands, has a victorious power upon earth. It must be recognized and respected. Was it not the courage with which the first confessors of Christianity proclaimed its doctrines to the heathen world, which gained the victory over heathen falsehood! The first Christians knew what they wanted. They knew that the true life of the children of light consists in despising and giving up the goods of this life through love of higher, supernatural goods. And although the heathens, (who were then the children of this world,) called the first confessors of Christianity fools and dreamers, yet the principles and doctrines of the Church, when fully expressed

and understood, overcame victoriously the blatant power of error. Thus, it is our duty, in the present age (when pagan principles are publicly proclaimed by the children of this world,) to proclaim as publicly and courageously our Christian truths, and to give testimony to them, so that they may ever gain greater victories for God among men.

II. "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." They not only act with greater wisdom, but they use greater *toil and effort* to reach their aim. The unjust steward made up his accounts, and determined how much he could remit to each of the debtors of his lord. He called them all together, and spoke to each one individually. He altered each one's bill of indebtedness. He made his proposals to each one in turn. He knew that he ran a risk of still greater disgrace by these proceedings. He knew the punishment which awaited him, if his roguery were discovered. But all this failed to deter him from his object. Neither labor, disgrace, nor the fear of punishment could change his criminal intentions. Behold a perfect child of this world, who firmly applies all his powers in order to accomplish his designs!

Has not the steward thousands of imitators? Alas! yes, we all act like true children of the world, when there is question of gaining some worldly end. Nothing is too laborious or difficult for worldly men. The prospect of some temporal reward or profit sets all their powers *untiringly* in motion; and the greater the profit which allures them, the less they regard their toil and efforts. Day and night, for long years, they labor. No obstacle staggers their invincible energy and industry. They bore through the mountains, they tunnel the bowels of the earth, and carry their roads under the beds of rivers. Their telegraph-wires stretch from land to land; and even the ocean must be made subject to their electric cable. Over the mountains rush their iron horses; the desert blossoms like the rose,—so that all nations may be brought within their circle of trade and commerce. They annihilate time and space, calling to their aid the powers of steam and other mysterious natural agencies. See what sacrifices of time and money, the children of this world are willing to make, to defeat the projects of the children of light! What activity reigns among them; what zeal, worthy of a better cause! They never halt half-way in their efforts. They neither slumber nor rest until they have attained their object. If, once in a while, their labors are fruitless, they re-commence them with fresh zeal and more arduous toil.

O my dear beloved, if *we* would only make like efforts, in serving God and saving our souls, what a grand success would be ours! The children of the world accomplish so much with only human powers, while the children of light, supported in their labors by heavenly graces,



effect so little ! Alas ! in the affair of salvation, do we not select the easiest duties, the lightest commands ? Are we not ever striving to combine the service of God with that of Mammon ? We grow faint at the least effort, we shrink from the smallest toil. If we used half the exertions of the children of the world—yes, if we did but one-tenth of what we ourselves do for earthly gain, we would be Saints, deserving of the most glorious heavenly crowns !

When it is necessary to defend Christian doctrines, and to spread them upon the earth, are we not entirely wanting in that spirit of sacrifice, in that combined force, which animates our opponents ? What indifference and inactivity reign in our ranks ! O “nation without counsel and without wisdom !” “How long do you halt between two sides ? If the Lord be God, follow him ; but if Baal, then follow him.” We must alter all this. Begin at once to be wise like the children of this world, and apply all your powers courageously and constantly to the acquisition of heavenly goods. Make good use of time and opportunity. This is our duty and the command of the Lord our God. For his holy kingdom, and for our soul’s salvation, we must put out to interest all the talents that have been intrusted to us. “Is not the life more than the food ?” (Matth. 6:2, 5.)

III. “The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.” They mostly surpass the children of light in *their prudence and circumspection*. The unjust steward was specially commended for his prudence. Before loss and misfortune overtook him he discreetly looked forward to the furtherance of his future interests. He employed the last moments of his stewardship with cunning address and diplomacy. Making an advantageous bargain with each of his lord’s debtors, he prudently relies upon the future gratitude of all.

The majority of the children of this world act with a like wisdom. They obey our Saviour’s injunction to be wise as serpents, but altogether forget or decline his other precept to be harmless as doves. With what prudence do the children of this world guard their goods and property ! They protect them with double locks and triple insurances ; and if they have suffered the most trifling loss, they are troubled and anxious to repair the damage. Consider the war which the leaders of the world wage against the kingdom of light—the Church of Jesus Christ ! With what cunning strategy are their campaigns planned ! Mark, how they turn against us every untoward circumstance, every human weakness and short-coming ! How often do they change their weapons and their mode of attack ! “We do not make war upon religion or Christianity,” they say, “but we wish to break down priestcraft, and papal autocracy !” They assert that



they wish to restore the Church to its pristine purity ; and that they only attack the abuses of the times ; that they only do battle against the Jesuits and Ultramontanists, whilst they respect true and faithful priests. The wisdom of the serpent speaks through their words, which are calculated to deceive the unwary. But, notwithstanding their lying protests, all their efforts are directed to the subversion or utter ruin of the Church of God.

If we, the children of light, would only imitate this prudent wisdom of the children of the world, what heavenly treasures would we not accumulate ! But alas ! we are generally foolish or indifferent about the things of God. We are innocent as doves, without being, at the same time, wise as serpents. Golden opportunities are suffered to slip by without being improved for the salvation of our souls. Year after year passes away ; Lent succeeds Lent, Advent follows Advent, with all their manifold graces and heavenly blessings,—and yet we are no richer in eternal goods.

We are wise enough and careful enough in earthly affairs. Perchance, whilst our temporal fortune increases, we grow poorer in the treasures of heaven. Foolishly and carelessly we rush on to the future, without improving the faults of the past.

We are just as silly in our warfare with the world. We allow ourselves to be deceived by its serpent-cunning. We are driven back from one post to another. We seldom know how to improve the circumstances of the times, and through our folly and our want of unanimity, we lose such favorable opportunities as present themselves.

Did not our Saviour truly say : “ The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light ” ? Are we not “ a nation without counsel and without wisdom ” ? Christian prudence is a cardinal virtue. Without it, we can neither gain nor keep the other virtues. Unless it directs man’s understanding and governs his will, in order to preserve him from the evils which threaten him on every side, with the best intentions, he will never attain to his high aim,—nay, worse : he will do more harm than good to the cause of our holy Church.

“ Blessed is the man that findeth wisdom, and is rich in prudence. The purchasing thereof is better than the merchandise of silver, and her fruit than the chiefest and purest gold : she is more precious than all riches : and all the things that are desired, are not to be compared with her.” (Prov. 3 : 13–15.) Let us, therefore, be as wise as the children of this world ; and richer treasures and greater results shall be our reward. We shall thus purchase for ourselves, with the worthless illusions of this world, and its perishable goods, the heavenly and unchanging riches of heaven. Amen.

BISHOP EHRLER.

## NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## THE SANCTITY OF THE TEMPLE OF GOD.

*"It is written : My house is the house of prayer."* (Luke 19 : 46.)

These are the remarkable words which our Saviour addressed to the buyers and sellers, when he drove them forth with a scourge from the Temple of Jerusalem. "It was a great miracle," says St. Jerome, "that the buyers and sellers permitted themselves to be cast out, and their tables overturned by our Redeemer, without making any resistance." "A fire flamed from his face," (Ps. 17 : 9) and a ray of the divinity shot forth from his eyes. "Thou art terrible, and who shall resist thee?" (Ps. 75 : 8.) We should draw much instruction from this proceeding of our Lord. If he was moved to such anger at the profanation of the Jewish temple, which was only an image and type of our holy Church, how indescribable must be his wrath against those Christians who are more irreverent in the house of God than the Turks are in their mosques! To-day, my dear brethren, let us reflect seriously on these emphatic words of Christ. "My house," says he, "is a *house of prayer*." Without doubt, then, a church is

I. *The house of God*, and

II. *The house of prayer*.

These two assertions are of sufficient importance to impress our minds with deep reverence for every Catholic church.

I. The church is really the house of God upon earth. For

1. *He dwells within it* ; and
2. *From it, he distributes his graces*.

1. God may justly say : "The world is mine" ; yet, in a much closer sense, he says of the church : "This is my house." For, not only is his divinity there present in an especial manner, but in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar his divinity and humanity are both concealed ; and if the church is the abiding-place of God upon earth, the tabernacle is his throne, in which "dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head corporally." (Col. 2 : 9.) St. Augustine remarks : "Our Saviour did not teach us to pray : 'Our Father who art in all places,'—although this would be strictly true—but he taught us : 'Our Father who art in heaven' ; for as, by the word 'heaven' the Church is generally meant,

God is, thus, in an especial manner, present in the church, as he is in heaven ; and, as the principal employment of the Angels and Saints in heaven is to praise God, this is, also, the chief business of men in the church. "In his temple all shall speak his glory," says the Psalmist. (Ps. 28 : 9.) "Indeed, the Lord is in this place." (Gen. 28 : 16.) Verily, God is there ; and he is there as a Master, because, in his name, all men and Angels shall be gathered together.

2. The church is that "mercy-seat" where every one that asks receives ; where he that seeks, finds ; and where, to him that knocks, the door is always opened. "I will bring them into my holy mount," says God by the mouth of Isaias, "and will make them joyful in my house of prayer ; their holocausts, and their victims shall please me upon my altar ; for my house shall be called the house of prayer for all nations." (Isai. 56 : 7.) The Psalmist also sings : "Holy is thy temple ; we shall be filled with the good things of thy house." (Ps. 64 : 5.) The house of Zacheus is a figure of the church ; for as soon as our Saviour had entered into it, he said : "This day is salvation come to this house." (Luke 19 : 9.) But how much more has salvation come into the church, in which God himself abides, not for a short while, but until the end of time ! How many sinners and infidels have not been converted in this holy place ! How often, in it, have we approached the table of the Lord ! How many reminders of the miracles and goodness of our Lord do we not see around us ! "Indeed, the Lord is in this place." "This is no other but the house of God." (Gen. 28 : 16-17.)

## II. My house is the house of prayer."

From these words, we may learn

1. *What we should do in church, and*
2. *What we should not do.*

1. In church, we must imitate the Angels in heaven. "All the Angels stood round about the throne. . . and they fell before the throne upon their faces, and adored God." (Apoc. 7 : 11.) "Whatever is written," says St. Bonaventure, "is written for our instruction." The Angels offer their homage to God with the greatest humility, so that contemplating their example, man may well be ashamed to be proud in the presence of his sovereign Lord. The Cenacle in Jerusalem, in which the Blessed Sacrament was instituted, was the first Catholic church. And how did the primitive Christians act therein ? "They were all together in the same place." (Acts 2 : 1.) "All these were persevering with one mind in prayer." (Acts 1 : 14.) Let us learn a les-

son from this conduct. And how devout were not the pagans in the temples of their false gods ! Is it not an everlasting disgrace to us that the heathens should show more reverence to their dumb idols, than we show to the living God ?

2. But this is not enough. We are not satisfied with a lack of devotion in prayer ; we even go so far as to insult God in his own house. "What is the meaning that my beloved hath wrought much wickedness in my house ?" he complains by the mouth of his prophet. "For if my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it ;" (Ps. 54 : 13) but it is not my enemy, a Turk, or a heathen, that has done this but "my beloved," and "in my house," hath he done it. "In the land of the saints, he hath done wicked things ; and he shall not see the glory of the Lord." (Isai. 26 : 10.) "Woe to the sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity !" (Isai. 1 : 4.) There are many who show less reverence in the house of God, than in the dwelling of a rich man. "For the Lord hath chosen Sion ; he hath chosen it for his dwelling." (Ps. 131 : 13.) St. Chrysostom laments that the church is but little more regarded than a market-place, in which men barter and traffic, and set out their wares to the best advantage.

My dear Christians, whenever you enter the church, remember these words of the prophet : "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, it is the temple of the Lord ;" (Jerem. 7 : 4) it is the house of God ; not a place for conversation, not a public office, nor a place of barter. If we attend to, or think upon, worldly business in this holy place, we (as far as it is in our power) transform the house of God into "a den of thieves." Reflect well upon this, when you enter the holy precincts of the church. "Keep thy foot, when thou goest into the house of God." (Ecclus. 4 : 17.) "Loose, saith he, thy shoes from off thy feet ; for the place whereon thou standest is holy." (Jos. 5 : 16.) "The Most High hath sanctified his own tabernacle." (Ps. 45 : 5.) Justly does the Psalmist ask : "Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle ?" And he answers his own question thus : "He that walketh without blemish, and worketh justice." (Ps. 14 : 12.) For nothing but "holiness becometh thy house, O Lord !" (Ps. 92 : 5.) Amen. B.

## NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## THE VISITATIONS OF GOD.

*"If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace ; but now they are hidden from thy eyes." (Luke 19 : 42.)*

That which the Gospel of to-day tells us of Jerusalem and the people of Israel, is a figure of that which takes place regarding whole nations, as well as individuals. In the life of both there are hours of destiny—moments which are the turning-points in their history, and which are followed by results reaching into future centuries. We might call such periods visitations of God, as our Saviour termed his last entrance into Jerusalem. Well for individuals and nations if they employ such hours profitably, according to the gracious will of God ! Such seasons will then be to them the beginning of new blessings. But woe to them, if, like the Jews, they do not know the hour of their visitation !

It is, therefore, of the highest importance that we should comprehend and utilize the visitations of divine grace ; and that we should, in such moments, understand and fulfil the words of the Lord : "If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace !" That this may be done, I will ask you to consider with me to-day,

I. *What is meant by a visitation of God ? and*

II. *How we should utilize the visitations of God.*

I. What do we call *visitations of God* ? Visitations of God are those moments and events in which the Lord, in a striking and visible manner, impresses us either by sorrow or joy. Every event, arranged or permitted by the Providence of God ; every effort of his love for our salvation, whether to encourage or to warn us, to reward or to punish us, to help us or to seemingly abandon us, must be called a visitation of God.

1. It is true that our faith tells us that there is no moment in which God's mercy and love are not near us. As the sun's rays illumine whole continents, and yet warm and bless the smallest leaf on the tree, the minutest grain of sand upon the sea-shore, so, according to faith, our lives in their important events as well as in their smallest

details, are arranged by the wisdom and goodness of God. In this sense, we may call the fate of nations, as well as of individuals, a visitation of God. "For in him we live, and we move, and we are." (Acts 17 : 28.) But there are, also, extraordinary and uncommon events and permissions of God in our regard ; and it is these, especially, that we call his visitations.

In this view, the history of the Israelites is a striking figure of all human life. That which we observe in the accounts of the chosen people, we can see in the history of every human heart. The Lord visited his people first through the Patriarchs, those holy and ardent servants of God, whose eyes were directed hopefully to a glorious future ; who were illuminated by the divine light, while all the rest of the earth lay bound in the gloomy night of paganism.

He visited his people in love and mercy through Moses, his powerful leader, who delivered them from Egyptian bondage, divided the waters of the Red Sea, and performed great miracles in the desert. The Lord gave his commandments to them, and spoke to Moses with his own mouth. He led them into the Promised Land, drove out its heathen inhabitants, and gave it to Israel for an inheritance.

Heroes and God-inspired men, he raised up among them, in order to protect them from all their enemies. He gave them great and powerful kings, and had his Temple erected among them so that he might remain always with them by the visitations of his grace. In the time of king Solomon, Israel stood at the summit of her splendor. She was the chosen bride of the Lord, adorned with the richest fruits of his love.

The Prophets were further visitations of the mercy of God ; they admonished the people of their high calling, warned them against the idolatrous worship of paganism, and spoke to them of the Redeemer to come.

At last, in the fulness of time, the Only-begotten Son of God appeared in human flesh, and visited his people. For thirty-three years, he dwelt in their midst. They could hear the words of divine wisdom from his own lips. To them it was given to behold the miracles of his almighty power, and to warm themselves in the rays of divine love that beamed forth from his divine countenance. When we hurriedly consider the visitations of the love of God to the Israelites, we may exclaim with Moses : " But the Lord's portion is his people ; Jacob the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, in a place of horror, and of waste wilderness : he led him about, and taught him : and he kept him as the apple of his eye. As the eagle enticing her young to fly, and hovering over them, he spread his wings, and hath taken him, and carried him on his shoulders. The Lord alone was his leader : and there was no strange god with him." (Deut. 32 : 9-12.)



2. Does not this history of the Jewish nation (so rich in the mercy and love of God) resemble the life of every man? Is not each one a chosen child of God, created to his image and likeness in preference to the thousands of other creatures? Where can you find one whose days are not filled with proofs of divine love and mercy? No matter how poor and humble our lot in life may be, each one of us can reckon up moments in which, overcome by the sudden and unexpected goodness of God, he was forced to cry out gratefully: "Lord, I am not worthy of the love and fidelity which thou hast shown to me!" Or, with St. Peter: "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" (Luke 5 : 8.) How often does God suddenly and unexpectedly remove from us a heavy sorrow, under whose hard yoke we have groaned for years? Light has dawned in the midst of darkness, health and life have come to put sickness and death to flight. Riches, honors, and dignities fell into our laps. Faithful friends appeared and comforted us in the hour of temptation, doubt, and mortal anguish. Calls of God resounded powerfully in our hearts, for our instruction and admonition.

3. If a man, amid life's many changes, should have received only a few of such visitations, are not those moments in which our Saviour pours his grace into our souls in the holy Sacraments, the greatest visitations of his love? Did not the Lord visit us in the beginning of our lives, sanctifying us and making a covenant of mercy with us, as he did with his chosen people? Did he not anoint and strengthen us with his spirit? He has taught us by his word, as he spoke of old, to the people of God, and his appointed, the priesthood of his Church for our Prophets. He solemnizes with still greater love the mystery of his holy Incarnation in our souls and consecrates us as living temples of his grace. He is always willing to manifest his mercy anew, after we have sinned and turned aside from his paths. That which Zachary exclaimed at the abrogation of the Old Covenant, we must repeat in view of the whole, or even a portion, of our lives: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, because he hath visited and wrought the redemption of his people!" (Luke 1 : 68.)

4. These visitations of God's love and tenderness to the Jews were always followed by the visitations of divine wrath and punishment whenever that people failed to regard the gracious calls of God, or became unworthy of his love.

Even in the journey through the wilderness, sudden death snatched off hosts of the Israelites. They were delivered by divine justice into the power of their enemies, and permitted to be oppressed by them. Disastrous wars, famine and pestilence depopulated their race. God

permitted them to be led into the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. He destroyed their temple, the pride and the sanctuary of the nation. "Without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without altar, and without ephod, and without theraphim," as the prophet laments, they were scattered among the heathen nations. (Oss. 3 : 4.) "Upon the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept : when we remembered Sion : on the willows in the midst thereof, we hung up our instruments. For they that led us into captivity, required of us the words of songs. And they that carried us away, said : Sing ye to us a hymn of the songs of Sion. How shall we sing the songs of the Lord in a strange land?" (Ps. 136 : 1, 4.) God laid his hand upon them still more heavily in punishment. He subjugated them under the hard yoke of the proud Romans. The sceptre was taken away from Juda, and the staff of power from his thigh. Jerusalem, together with the temple, was razed to the ground, and remains to this day as a monument of the punishment with which the Lord visited his chosen people and their holy city. No other nation of the earth has been elevated and distinguished as the Israelites have been, and no other one has been as deeply humiliated and punished ! "I will visit their iniquities with a rod, and their sins with stripes." (Ps. 88 : 33.) This threat of the Lord was fearfully fulfilled in their history.

Which one of us has not been visited by God in anger and punishment for having slighted the visitations of his love and mercy ? Have we not all felt the scourges of his justice in various ways ? Shall I enumerate the many misfortunes with which every man is punished, and which are permitted by the Lord for our correction ? Our fairest hopes are suddenly blasted on the very eve of fulfilment. We stretch out our hands to grasp a long-desired object, and it vanishes from our gaze. Years of toil and trouble go unrewarded. Fire, water, and storms destroy the property and prosperity of one person. Unexpected misfortunes reduce another to beggary in a short time. Sickness enters into the house of a third and fills it with the bitterest want and sorrow. Death inflicts deep wounds, which heal slowly, if ever.

II. In order that the sad fate of the Jewish people, unto its bitter end, may not overtake us, I ask : *How should we receive, and profit by, the visitations of God ?*

1. The pious Christian sees in all the visitations of God (whether sad or joyful) the hand of a gracious Father, whose power he adores, and before whom he, at every moment, prostrates himself. We are not like the heathens, who tremblingly bow down before a blind fate, which, with cruel sport, gives and takes away its gifts, but, with Holy Writ, we say : "In his hands are all the ends of the earth : and the heights

of the mountains are his." (Ps. 94 : 4.) "Lord, thou hast proved me, and known me : thou hast known my sitting down, and my rising up. Thou hast understood my thoughts afar off : my path and my line thou hast searched out. And thou hast foreseen all my ways." (Ps. 138 : 1, 4.)

If the Lord be gracious to him and the sun of prosperity shine upon his life—he says with the Psalmist : "This is the Lord's doing : and it is wonderful in our eyes." (Ps. 117 : 23.) With the Blessed Virgin, he exclaims gratefully : "He that is mighty hath done great things to me : and holy is his name." (Luke 1 : 49.) If misfortune and ill-luck be his portion ; if want and sorrow beset him on every side, if he be surrounded by clouds and night, so that the stars seem extinguished,—he says with the same confidence : "This is the Lord's doing, and it is wonderful in our eyes." With holy Job he exclaims : "The hand of the Lord hath touched me." (Job 19 : 21.)

2. Herein lies the great difference between a Christian and an infidel. He who is not penetrated with faith in divine Providence, may search the whole world through and not find the cause of the adverse events of his life. The ungodly man ascends to the stars, and dives into the depths of the earth, hoping to discover the hidden causes of the various effects in nature. How often is his wisdom misled and deceived ! He acknowledges the hand of man and the powers of nature, but he does not perceive the finger of God which directs them both, according to his good will ! The Christian, in considering earthly events, rises above all sublunary causes, up to the Lord God, who holds in his hand the threads of all earthly destinies. He beholds, in his wisdom, the first great Cause of all things.

This is true wisdom, which alone can render man happy, and even contented with the hardest lot. The Providence of God is a truth, whose importance was recognized even by that heathen sage who said : "Give me a firm fulcrum outside of the world, and I will move the whole earth out of its orbit." While all terrene things waver before the eyes of the Christian, he is firmly grounded in the thought of the divine Providence which supports him in all the events of his life.

3. Every visitation of God has also a higher object in view : the sanctification of our souls. The Apostle says : "This is the will of God, your sanctification." (1 Thes. 4 : 3.) "We know that to them that love God, all things work together unto good." (Rom. 8 : 28.) Every event is not merely willed or permitted by God in a general way, but is ordained by his loving wisdom, ultimately and especially, for the sanctification of our souls. We must be educated for eternal life ; and joy and sorrow are the teachers appointed by God for our instruction.

He distributes light and shade in our lives as it seems best to him. But if he wishes to approach us by one of his visitations, we should come forward to meet him, and apply to our souls' salvation whatever he brings us.

Joyful visitations should be incentives to greater love and fidelity to him. Joy widens man's heart and urges him forward to the Lord, as the source of all happiness. Only a coarse, degraded nature can enjoy God's benefits without divine love increasing in his heart or divine praises in his mouth. Love is the sister of joy, and enters with it into the soul of man if its natural dispositions have not been spoiled by sin.

Joyful visitations should also awaken in our hearts a greater and purer subjection to divine providence—an entire resignation to his holy will. Who would wish to injure and insult him from whom he has just received benefits? A ready obedience to the commands of our God is the proof of our love, without which it is only a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Let this nobler love of God, and this faithful obedience to his holy will, be our answer to our good and gracious Father after every visitation of his mercy.

But visitations of sorrow also come from God for the salvation of our souls, and must be accepted in that spirit. They are calls which admonish us to return to him; efforts of his love to forcibly detach us from the earth; and they are, at the same time, wholesome, penitential exercises for our sins. Who would not willingly, and even thankfully, receive the severest visitation from the hand of God, if from the passion flower of pain and sorrow, the exquisite odors of peace and repentance are exhaled?

4. Joy and happiness often intoxicate and mislead the heart of man. The high and serious character of the Christian does not easily accord with earthly pleasures. Myriads of times do we find repeated in the life around us the Scriptural history of the prodigal son! As he was too comfortable in his father's house he left it, saying insolently: "Father, give me that portion of substance that falleth to me!" Afterwards, hunger and nakedness forced from him the cry: "I will arise, and will go to my father, and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee: I am now not worthy to be called thy son." (Luke 15: 12, 18, 19.)

Many sinners, oppressed by want and misfortune, return to God after the pleasures of life had caused them to forget him. "When God sends you afflictions," says a great orator, "he does so in order to break asunder the bonds that chain you to the earth, and to remind you of your true fatherland." St. Augustine still more beautifully explains the necessity of pain and sorrow, "so that the wanderer, who travels

towards his home, may not love this earthly stable instead of his father's house."

Even if the Lord wished to spare us the visitations of sufferings, he dared not do so ; for we should then forget him more quickly than we imagine. He dares not do so, because he would thus deprive us of the opportunity of doing penance for our sins. Sorrow is the great law of earthly life because of sin. He who has sinned must atone for his faults, and purify his soul by present suffering, if he would avoid the eternal torments of hell.

Should we not then bless and joyfully receive every visitation of sorrow which the Lord may send us ? He calls us to himself by earthly suffering, and admonishes us to remember Heaven and eternity. If he inflicts deep and bleeding wounds in our hearts, he acts like the surgeon who, by this means, heals the whole body. He acts like a gracious and merciful father who, on account of the few and trifling troubles of this life, will remit to us the great debt we owe to his eternal justice. "Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." (Job 10 : 12.) "For whom the Lord loveth, he chastiseth : and he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." (Hebr. 12 : 6.)

Let us bow down patiently under the chastising hand of God, and the sufferings and tears of this life will wash away from our souls all the stains of sin, and render our corrupt hearts pure and beautiful in the sight of God.

Who can know or say what visitations of God await us in the future—whether joyful or sorrowful ? The coming years stand darkly before us, veiled from all human eyes. God's visitations sometimes approach slowly, so that man can foresee their coming ; but generally, as experience teaches, they overtake us suddenly and unexpectedly. A decisive hour approaches, and our fate has taken a different turn ! And as we do not know what the future contains for us, let us raise our eyes to him who carries our lot in his hand, that he may lead us through the bewildering paths of this world, to our eternal home in heaven ! Amen.

BISHOP EHRLER.



## TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## PRIDE.

*"Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled."* (Luke 18 : 14.)

To-day, our Saviour places before us a Pharisee and a publican, that is, a proud and an humble man. Among the Jews, the Pharisees were highly esteemed for their supposed sanctity. To all appearances, they led a most mortified life. They fasted, prayed, watched, gave alms, lay upon the bare ground ; and in all their actions had the appearance of virtue ; but they were in reality proud and boastful of their good works. By the name of publican was understood those public, abandoned sinners, who were avoided by decent people. "A Pharisee and a publican went up into the temple to pray," and, wonderful to relate, the publican "went down to his house justified, rather than the other." Let us examine into the reason why the Pharisee was not justified. Without doubt, his pride was the obstacle to his perfection. Our Saviour expressly says : "Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled." I will endeavor to place this detestable vice before you to-day, in its true colors. Pride, or an inordinate desire for our own excellence, proceeds either

I. *From blindness in the understanding, or*

II. *From vanity in the will.*

If we only comprehend clearly these two points, we shall certainly avoid all pride, and thus remove from our path the greatest obstacle to our justification and salvation.

I. The proud man is deceived,

1. *By the good opinion he has of himself : and*
2. *By arrogating to himself the gifts of God.*

1. Blinded in our understanding, we pride ourselves upon the gifts of the mind, temporal goods, or an appearance of sanctity. Miserable creatures that we are ! we are neither learned, nor rich, nor holy. We are deceived by false appearances ; we are blind. Can any man truly say that he is learned ? He may know many things, it is true, but there are still many more of which he is ignorant. The most profound scholar or scientist has not a thorough knowledge of all things, but only an opinion concerning them. He can not say of any thing



that he knows it, all that he can aver is, "I think, . . . I opine, . . . I guess!" And as to riches—who can say that he is, indeed, rich? Your goods belong not to you, but to God. He has intrusted them to you, not for your honor or gratification but for his own glory. You are only a steward, not a sovereign owner. You are not allowed to use your possessions according to your own pleasure, but in accordance with the divine will. And, after all, how transitory are not earthly goods! You are blind if you pride yourselves upon them. To-day, you may be as rich as Cræsus; and to-morrow, you may be reduced to beggary. "Thou sayest: I am rich, and made wealthy, and I have need of nothing: and thou knowest not, that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Apoc. 3: 17.) Neither can you, with the Pharisee, pride yourself upon your piety; for, "Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred." (Ecclus. 9: 1.) We know full well that we have sinned, and we have no positive assurance of God's pardon. The Wise Man warns us saying: "Be not without fear about sin forgiven." (Ecclus. 5: 5.) We know not whether we have ever performed a single action perfectly pleasing to God. "For our iniquities are multiplied before thee." (Isai. 59: 12.)

2. Whatever good there may be in us, comes from God. The proud man, however, is so perverted that he ascribes his gifts to himself, and not to God. He deifies himself in his own thoughts. "O proud man!" says St. Bonaventure, "you followed after the impure Lucifer. You esteemed yourself as a god. Do you not know, that all that you have, comes from God? If you think to have any thing from yourself, then you set yourself up for a god." "I will be like the Most High," said the haughty Lucifer. Pride began with Satan, who exalted himself on account of the gifts bestowed upon him by God. Just as now, the proud man will submit to no authority, but would wish to set himself above all; so also that arrogant spirit said: "I will ascend above the height of the clouds. (Isai. 14: 13.) How hateful is this vice, which had its origin in rebellion against God! Behold, your legitimate ruler, ye proud ones, ye sons of Satan, for "he is king over all the children of pride." (Job 41: 25.) Pride blinds you as it did him, when you arrogate to yourselves the gifts which you have received from the pure bounty of God!

II. Pride, which proceeds from *vanity in the will*, causes a man to be enamored of his own excellence; and makes him seek his satisfaction

1. *Partly in that which he is*; and
2. *Partly in that which he is not*, but, in no case, in God.

1. "The beginning of the pride of man, is to fall off from God." And in this sense, "pride is the beginning of all sin." (Ecclus. 10: 14, 15.) For, as all sin consists in turning away from the Creator towards creatures, so pride, especially, sets aside the desire of pleasing God, and finds its gratification in pleasing itself. The objects of his pride are always before the proud man's eyes. His riches, his mental gifts, his bodily endowments, or whatever else excites his pride, awaken in him such a feeling of satisfaction, that he is wholly taken up with the gifts, to the exclusion of the Giver. He wishes to be admired and praised for them. Hence it comes, that a proud woman stands always before her looking-glass, contemplating her beauty and fine attire; that a learned man always admires his own publications, and endeavors to press his opinions upon others; that an artist generally condemns the work of others, and extols his own. But, all these empty conceits only betray the vanity of their victim. "He that glorieth, may glory in the Lord," says the Apostle. (1 Cor. 1:31.) But pride does exactly the opposite. It seeks glory, not in the Lord, but in itself, as though one's gifts originated with one's self, and not God. O, what vanity!

2. The proud man not only glories in that which he is, but also in that which he is *not*. He imagines himself to be something, whereas, he is nothing. He fancies himself holy, or learned, or handsome, when in reality he has none of these qualities. Pride blinds him, and self-love, the first-born daughter of pride, so darkens the light of his understanding, that he imagines that he possesses great gifts, when he either does not possess them at all, or, only in a very trifling degree. Therefore he is, and remains, a fool, no matter how wise he may think himself. "His foolish heart has become darkened," says St. Augustine. And from what cause? On account of pride. St. Chrysostom shows this folly of the arrogant and proud, in the following beautiful comparison: "When a person is a dwarf, and yet imagines that he is a great giant, no one doubts but what he is foolish. So also, when a proud man thinks he is better than others, and believes himself insulted if he is not elevated above others; without further delay, he should be set down for a fool. For what could well be more foolish than to imagine one's self great, learned, or pious, when, in truth, one has no claim whatever to true greatness, learning, or piety?"

Dearly beloved, have you sufficiently considered the blindness and vanity of the proud man? If so, it will be impossible for you, even in thought, ever to say with the Pharisee: "I am not as the rest of men." I acknowledge, indeed, that you are not robbers, extortioners, or adulterers; but if you have not yet committed these crimes, (like the publican,) it is not owing to your own strength, but to the grace of

God. Do not exalt yourselves, lest you be humbled. You have, truly, no cause for self-esteem. "Why is earth and ashes proud?" (Ecclus. 10:9.) "Pride was not made for men." (Ecclus. 10:22.) "Be not high-minded, but fear," says St. Paul. (Rom. 11:20.) Remember, always, that you are miserable, wicked sinners. If you wish to be justified with the publican of to-day's Gospel, humble yourselves with him, and follow his example of repentant contrition: "The publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift his eyes towards heaven: but struck his breast, saying: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." Why, O proud man, should *you* look up to heaven, when you have sinned against heaven? Look towards the earth, that you may learn to know yourself. This will remind you that you are dust and ashes, and that unto dust and ashes, you must, one day, return. Amen.

B.

## TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## HUMILITY.

*"Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled."* (Luke 18 : 14.)

How differently does the Searcher of hearts regard the devotion recorded jointly of the Pharisee and the publican in to-day's Gospel ! He rejects the prayer of the former, dismissing him without grace ; but he is pleased with the prayer of the latter, declaring him to be justified upon the spot. The Pharisee, though leading a chaste and mortified life, was proud and self-conceited, therefore, he was rejected, "for God resisteth the proud" : but the publican, though only a poor sinner, was humble, therefore, he was justified, "for God giveth grace to the humble." Learn from this, my dear friends, the importance and necessity of humility, for it is only when we sincerely abase ourselves before God, that he is pleased with us and gives us his graces. Hence I intend to speak to you this morning on the virtue of humility, and say that without it there is

I. *No forgiveness of sins,*

II. *No meritorious work, and*

III. *No perseverance in virtue and good works.*

I. *Without humility there is no forgiveness of sins.* Where humility is wanting, the necessary conditions for the forgiveness of sins are, also, wanting :

1. *A true self-knowledge.* The man who is blinded by pride and self-esteem neither knows himself nor acknowledges his sinfulness. Like the Pharisee, he trusts in himself as just. If any one reproves him or reminds him of his sins, he tries in every possible way to excuse himself ; for he cannot humble himself so far as to acknowledge that he has sinned. He also persistently avoids searching the folds of his conscience, lest he should find there something that would be humiliating.

2. *A true contrition.* Pride and contrition are as incompatible as darkness and light. How can a man who has true contrition entertain proud thoughts ? Knowing as he does, and feeling in the depth of

his soul, that he is a miserable sinner and deserving of punishment, all self-esteem is lost in the abyss of his abasement. There has never yet been a repentant sinner who was not humble of heart. Look at the publican in the Gospel. The consciousness of his sinfulness pressed upon him with such overpowering weight, that he dared not go up to the altar as the Pharisee, nor even so much as to raise his eyes towards heaven ; full of shame and confusion, he stood afar off with bowed head, and struck his breast, sighing : “ O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” Hence, you see, dear brethren, that where there is a true contrition, there is humility ; and where there is no humility, there can be no contrition.

3. *A sincere confession.* Pride prevents its victim from laying bare his secret miseries by a sincere confession. The proud man either conceals altogether those sins the confession of which would be humiliating to him, or if he reveal them at all to his spiritual physician, he so diminishes and palliates them that they appear as insignificant faults. On the contrary, like the Pharisee in the Gospel, he takes great pains to render conspicuous all his good works, and whatever else might directly or indirectly redound to his credit. Indeed, there are Christians who, instead of accusing themselves of their sins in the holy tribunal of Penance, there reveal and manifest their virtues and good deeds, as if the priest in the confessional had the office of canonizing saints, instead of that of absolving penitents from their sins.

4. *A willingness to make satisfaction.* Need I tell you, my brethren, that the proud man is destitute of this readiness to make amends for his past transgressions ? How should *he* consent to exercises of penance, when he does not believe himself guilty before God, and regards himself, and wishes to be regarded by others, rather as a saint than as a sinner ? Now, since such an individual refuses to recognize and acknowledge his crimes, since he is not sorry for them, and does not confess them, or make satisfaction for them, is it not self-evident that the proud man can never obtain forgiveness of his sins ?

5. That the humble, not the proud, obtain such a forgiveness of their sins, we plainly see in the histories of Saul and David. Both had grievously sinned. Being reminded of their sins by the Prophets Samuel and Nathan, both in turn, acknowledged themselves sinners. But while God pardoned David immediately, he turned away from Saul and refused to pardon him. Why this difference ? Because the one humbled himself, the other did not. As soon as David was reproached with his crime by Nathan, he abased himself profoundly, and full of contrition cried out with tears : “ *I have sinned.*” This

humble and penitent disposition pleased the Lord, and therefore he pardoned him. Saul, indeed, also said "*I have sinned*," but he did not humble himself before God because of his guilt, but remained what he was before, a proud and ambitious man, adding to the words, "*I have sinned*," "yet honor me now before the ancients of my people" (1 Kings 15 : 30) ; hence, he was rejected by God.

II. *Without humility no work is meritorious before God.*

1. A document or deed, in order to possess validity and value, must have a proper seal and signature affixed to it. You may have in your possession the deed of a certain house or a piece of land, but unless it bear the seal and signature of the conveying or deeding party, that otherwise important document proves utterly null and worthless. Now, what seal and signature are to a deed, humility is to good works. If that important element be wanting, even the best of human actions, the brightest and most shining of virtues, being meritless and profitless before God, deserve no eternal reward.

2. In the beautiful parable of St. Matthew which likens the kingdom of heaven to ten virgins who went forth with their lamps to meet the bridegroom and his bride, we read that five of the virgins, being foolish maidens, neglected to provide oil for their lamps, and knocking at the door of the bridegroom, heard to their consternation the appalling words : "I know you not." (Matth. 25 : 12.) Why so ? Is not virginal chastity one of the most sublime and brilliant of virtues, beloved alike by God and man ? Certainly ; nevertheless, these virgins were excluded from the presence of the bridegroom and were not permitted to partake of the nuptial banquet, because the oil of humility was wanting. St. Gregory says : "Behold the ten virgins ; all are virgins, but all are not admitted to the banquet, because some of them seeking honor before the world on account of their virginity, had no oil in their lamps."

3. Again, in the case of the Pharisee we have the record of a class of men who, in their turn, did a great deal of apparent good ; they prayed with great fervor, they fasted austere, they gave large alms to the poor, and observed all the ordinances and ceremonies of the Mosaic Law with scrupulous care and exactness. Notwithstanding all this, Christ says : "Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matth. 5 : 20.) Why does our divine Lord thus declare the justice of the Scribes and Pharisees to be insufficient for heaven ? Principally, because they were destitute of humility. Full of pride and



vain-glory, those self-complacent devotees, in all that they did, sought not the honor and glory of God, but the praise and applause of men, and for this reason, having already received their reward from the world, they were justly deprived of their heavenly and eternal reward.

4. And so it is, dear brethren, that every one who is not humble of heart will share the fate of the foolish virgins, the Scribes and Pharisees ; for even if such persons spend a long life in the apparent practice of every virtue, all their pious exercises are valueless before God ; and they may cry out at the hour of death the words which Simon Peter addressed to our divine Lord after the fishermen had made a long and profitless use of their nets in the waters of Lake Genesareth, " We have labored the night, and have taken nothing." St. Gregory says : " He who gathers virtues without humility, throws sand against the wind." And this alone is sufficient to prove how necessary humility is, since without it all other virtues and good works are fruitless, and profitless for eternal salvation.

### III. *Without humility there is no perseverance in virtue.*

1. *Faith* convinces us of this important truth. While we sojourn here upon earth in this mortal body, we are exposed to many great and dangerous temptations. At one time, it is the devil who lays snares for our destruction ; again, it is the world which employs every stratagem to decoy us into those snares ; and then it is the flesh that allures us to sin. In order to overcome these temptations, we need the grace of God, and we can count upon the grace of God, only if we are truly humble of heart.

St. Anthony, seeing the whole world covered with snares which the devil had laid for men, full of anguish cried out : " O Lord, who shall escape ? " And he heard the answer : " Only the humble." Yes, dear brethren, humility alone walks securely. As long as one is humble, he stands firmly in virtue, he is a pillar of strength ; but the moment he becomes proud he totters and falls, and is often permitted by God to become a spectacle to angels and to men : " He hath showed might in his arms : he hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath cast down the mighty from their seat." (Luke 1 : 50, 52.)

2. *History* also proves that humility is essential to final perseverance. Consider the terrible fate of the fallen angels. As soon as they listened to the suggestions of pride, God withdrew his grace from them, and they were obliged to exchange heaven for hell : " I saw Satan as lightning falling from heaven." (Luke 10 : 18.)

It was pride also that induced our first parents to eat of the forbid-

den fruit and bring sin and misery upon themselves and their whole posterity, for inasmuch as the angels sinned through a proud desire to possess the power of God, Adam and Eve prevaricated through an equally proud desire and criminal longing for his wisdom. Again : Tertullian and Origen were Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and zealous defenders of the holy faith, and bid fair (because of their virtues and pious labors) to be enrolled upon the catalogue of the Saints ; but allowing themselves, alas ! to be intoxicated by the incense of praise which was wafted before them by their injudicious admirers, they yielded to pride, the grace of God departed from them, and they even went so far as to defile themselves with the stain of heresy.

Dear friends, learn from what you have heard, how necessary humility is for salvation. Without it, there is no forgiveness of sin, there is no good work meritorious for heaven, and there is no final perseverance. He who is not truly humble, cannot work out his salvation. Let us, then, ascend on high by humility, for this is the way, and there is no other way than humility. He who goes otherwise, descends rather than ascends. It is humility alone that exalts and leads to life. This is the eternal law : "*Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled ; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*" (Luke 18 : 14.) Amen.

J. E. ZOLLNER.

## ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## PRUDENCE IN SPEECH.

*"The string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke right."* (Mark 7 : 35.)

We are told in this day's Gospel, that our Saviour made a deaf-mute speak. Would that I were able, my brethren, at least in some cases, to make many talkers dumb. Why? Because no sins are more frequently committed nor more difficult to cure than those of the tongue. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man." (James 3 : 2.) "He that keepeth his mouth, keepeth his soul." (Prov. 13 : 3.) "As a city that lieth open and is not compassed with walls, so is a man that can not refrain his own spirit in speaking." (Prov. 25 : 28.) These are pithy sentences from Holy Writ, to the truth of which many of us can testify from our own experience! "It is good for a man to wait with silence for the salvation of God." (Lam. 3 : 26.)

It is good for him if, in conversation, he abstains from all that is

I. *Boastful* ;

II. *Blasphemous* ; and

III. *Defamatory*.

As these are the worst vices of the tongue, I shall endeavor, on this occasion, to urge upon you the necessity for salutary silence.

I. "God resisteth the proud," says the apostle, (James 4 : 6)—how much more then does he resist the boastful? Boasting is a species of pride, and proceeds from it, as a tree from its root; but pride has already reached a high degree when it breaks out into boasting. We scarcely ever find a boaster whose heart is not full of pride. "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." The bird is known by its song and a proud man by his boasting. When the Psalmist says, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give glory," (Ps. 113 : 1) the boaster says just the opposite: "Not to thy name, O Lord, but to *us* give glory!" Pride may remain concealed, for some time, in the heart, but the deeper it strikes its roots into the interior of a man, the sooner the language of boasting is heard. "My belly is as new wine," may the proud say with Eliu, "which bursteth the new vessels."

(Job 32 : 19.) The boaster must have an opportunity to talk, or he will burst. He seeks for listeners to whom he may brag of his vain doings, to whom he discloses all his self-complacent thoughts, and on whom he impresses the idea that he is a great, a wonderful man. He regrets that the time is too short to tell all he has to say, and asks the honor of another interview, not that he may edify his neighbor by useful conversation, but that his erudition may be admired. He does not desire to teach you or receive instruction from you ; the sole object of his talk is to convince every one of his superior attainments. If the conversation happens to be on piety, even here, he is not at a loss ; he at once relates his own visions and dreams ; he takes pains to let you know all about his fasts, his vigils, his penances, his prayers ; he discourses so learnedly and fluently about patience, humility, and all other virtues, that one might take him for a theologian or doctor of the Church. In short, it is easy to recognize the boaster. Who can be pleased in beholding such a caricature of virtue ?

II. The boaster robs God of his honor, but *the blasphemer*, still bolder, openly insults and revolts against the Most High. "Who is this who speaketh blasphemies ?" (Luke 5 : 21.) O, shame, "it is the son of man who is a worm." (Job 25 : 6.) There is no vice which in greatness and malice can be compared with it. "For whilst other sinners turn from the Creator to the creature, the blasphemer not satisfied with this degree of malice, declares open war, as it were, against God. "They have whetted their tongues, like a sword," (Ps. 63 : 4) says the Psalmist. "They have bent their tongues like a bow." And against whom are these weapons of war aimed ? "Whom hast thou blasphemed ?" asks the prophet ; "against whom hast thou exalted thy voice and lifted up thy eyes on high ?" (Is. 37 : 23.) O, ingratitude ! against "the Holy One of Israel," against God, against your Creator and your Redeemer, your greatest Benefactor ! "Woe to the sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a wicked seed, ungracious children, they have blasphemed the Holy One of Israel !" (Is. 1 : 4.) Other sins may be excused as being the result of human weakness, committed through ignorance or sensual gratification, but blasphemy is a sin of pure malice. Are not these reflections sufficient to hinder us from ever being guilty of this horrible sin ?

III. The third and most common vice of the tongue is *detraction*. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," is the first and most important commandment of the divine law ; and the second, (mark well what I say) the second is like unto this in importance, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Matt. 22 : 37.) Now, by what sin is the love of the neighbor more frequently and more grievously violated than by

calumny and detraction? The calumniator is worse than the thief, since a good name is better than all temporal goods. And the Wise Man exhorts his disciple: "Take care of thy good name, for it is more durable than all treasures." Therefore, are "detractors hateful to God." (Rom. 1 : 30.) Yes, "the detractor is an abomination to men," (Prov. 24 : 9.) because he carries in his mouth the filth of others' faults, and soils not only himself, but all those who listen to him. The Wise Man compares the calumniator to a serpent: "If a serpent bite in silence, he is nothing better that backbiteth secretly." (Ecclus. 10 : 11.) "They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; the venom of asps is under their lips." (Ps. 139 : 4.) "Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." (Ps. 13 : 3.) But, alas! poor fools! they do themselves the greatest injury. "I kill myself," says St. Augustine, "whenever I rob any one of his reputation." "They were turned aside like a crooked bow." (Ps. 77 : 37.) Calumny is a crooked bow; for the arrow shot from it to injure an enemy, straightway returns to wound the unhappy archer.

Henceforward, my dearly beloved, resolve that no detracting, blaspheming, nor boasting tongue be heard amongst you, since it is well to look for the salvation of God in this threefold silence. Doing this, the string of our tongue will be loosed and we will speak right; or, at least, we shall thus have avoided the greatest and most dangerous sins of the tongue. "Let each refrain his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no guile." (1 Peter 3 : 10.) "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man." (Jas. 3 : 2.) "If any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is vain." (Jas. 1 : 26.) "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity." (Jas. 3 : 6.) But must we then remain mute? No. "There is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak." (Ecclus. 3 : 7.) "A wise man will hold his peace till he see opportunity, but a babbler and a fool will regard no time." (Ecclus. 20 : 7.) A just man must, it is true, keep silence, but not be dumb. He must, indeed, "Be slow to speak," (James 1 : 19) but it is sometimes better to speak than to be silent. We shall not err, if we follow the advice of St. Chrysostom: "Let us always keep our mouth closed, and never open it except with the key of reason." Amen.

B.

## ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## INVALID CONFESSIONS

*"He spoke right."* (Mark 7 : 35.)

These words not only indicate the restoration of speech and hearing to the deaf-mute of the Gospel, but also the importance of human speech and the necessity of properly employing that useful faculty. The tongue of man is one of his most important members—a safe barometer of the dispositions of the heart, and, (if we be not hypocrites), a true mirror of our whole interior.

What noble and beautiful uses can not a man make of his tongue ! By the word of his mouth, he proclaims the praise of God, sings hymns to his honor and glory, and wins numberless souls to his service. By speech, we make profession of faith, give expression to love of God,—edify, instruct, and console our neighbor—But we may also abuse our tongue by devoting it to vile purposes. With it, a man may lie, perjure himself, curse, swear, and blaspheme God. With it, he may offer himself as a confederate to the devil. In the holy Sacrament of Penance he may falsify or misrepresent his sins, or he may make an insufficient and partial, and, consequently, an invalid, confession. His tongue, in short, may become a cross, whereon he again crucifies his Saviour.

Allow me, therefore, to warn you against such an abuse of your tongues, and to encourage you by an humble, sincere, contrite and entire confession of your sins, to give thanks to God for the use of this member. I consider it necessary to speak plainly, because I know that a lamentable ignorance prevails upon this point. What will it profit us to comprehend the beauties of our holy religion, if we know not how to fulfill some of its simplest duties ? Considering carefully the multitude of invalid confessions which are continually made, it seems to me that they all proceed from a threefold deficiency :

- I. *That of the understanding, which does not recognize the sin ;*
- II. *That of the heart, which does not repent of the sin ;*
- III. *That of the will, which will not confess the sin, and amend the life.*

I. To very many, confession is a mere ordinance of the Church which they are bound to obey at stated times. This much they know : that they must mention their sins, at least, once a year, to a duly-authorized priest, in order to obtain absolution of them ; but why the Lord



should require from us a confession of sin ; how confession is a necessary want of the guilty conscience ; in what relation this Sacrament stands to the other means of grace ; what great blessings flow from it, not only for the individual, but the general welfare of human society, and how plain traces of it are found among all nations—all this is either entirely unknown, or only partially understood by the majority. The greater part of men receive no other religious instruction than that which they get at school. As a rule, they avoid sermons, they never read a religious book, and thus an ignorance of religious truth is begotten, which can not be sufficiently deplored. Herein is often found the source of that religious indifference which leads to infidelity. Shall we wonder that such men receive the holy Sacrament of Penance infrequently, and most unwillingly ! that they decry and blaspheme what they term a hard and tyrannical precept of the Church ?

It is possible, indeed, that a penitent, lacking this full understanding of the Sacrament of Penance, might yet receive it worthily for the salvation of his soul. He who confesses his sins with an humble and contrite heart in order to receive absolution from them by the mouth of the priest, will receive fully the grace of God ; for the Sacraments derive their efficacy from the power of Christ, and not from the penitent's personal capacity or ability. But ignorance of the essence of this Sacrament too often, alas ! leads to another, and far more dangerous result—viz. : ignorance of the conditions upon which a worthy and valid reception of this Sacrament depends. Such men do not know their sins to repent of them and to confess them, hence, they make invalid confessions.

1. The first requisite of a good confession is *an exact knowledge of the state of one's conscience*. He who would obtain pardon of his sins, must repent of them, and detest them with all his heart ; and he must accuse himself of them to the representative of Christ. He must endeavor to repair their evil consequences, and make satisfaction for them. How is all this possible without an exact and full knowledge of the state of one's soul, without a careful examination of one's conscience ? The failure of the understanding to know the sins must necessarily lead to a want of sorrow in the heart ; and in the will, to a want of strong resolution to amend ; and thus the confession is rendered invalid.

How do most men prepare for confession ? It is Easter time, or it is the eve of some great festival. One man goes to the church, after great efforts and a long struggle with himself. His mind is distracted with business—with agreeable or unpleasant news which he has just heard. He tries to look into the affairs of his soul, but his attention is carried off by family cares, money-troubles, every-day schemes and

speculations. Another man goes through human respect ; he dreads disgrace before his children and dependents ; he fears the reproaches and supplications of his wife, or he would not go at all to the Sacraments. His faith is only a flickering flame ; his examination of conscience is most vague and superficial. Alas ! how different it was when he was young and innocent ! Then, the slightest imperfection grieved his heart. But time has altered all this. The more numerous and grievous his sins—the colder and more callous his conscience has become. Hastily skimming through a printed catalogue of sins, he approaches the confessional, simply to get rid of an unpleasant duty.

Others are sadly deceived by self-love. They are misled by their own false lights. They measure their actions by the standard of a sensual and infidel generation. The things they confess,—according to their own account,—are human weaknesses and venial sins, which it was impossible to avoid. Full of self-importance, they are ready to cry out with the Pharisee : “ O God, I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers.” (Luke 18 : 11.) How often are the greatest sins and scandals omitted in confession because they are not esteemed of importance ! Can such confessions be valid ?

2. If we wish to receive worthily and efficaciously the Sacrament of Penance, we must first lay aside all this ignorance and want of understanding. Our reason must be our first sacrifice to the Lord. This faculty has primarily averted our hearts from the Creator to the creature—it has led us astray from our highest Aim ; it is, then, but just that it begin the business of amendment. By prayer and invocation of the Holy Ghost, we must search into the depths of our interior, and test it in the light of God’s justice. This search must be made with zeal and exactitude. “ I will search Jerusalem with lamps,” says the repentant soul, as it passes in view all the duties of religion and of its state of life, in order to learn in what, and how often it has failed to fulfill them. The true penitent must resemble a physician who goes to the very root of the disease ; and does not shrink from the use of fire or the knife, in order to eradicate the evil. There must be no self-deception. Least of all, must the sinner spare his predominant passion or his habitual failings. He must act as impartially as if this were his last confession, and the prelude to his arraignment before the judgment-seat of Christ.

II. While even the most careless of Christians acknowledges the necessity of strict examination of conscience before confession, that other most important essential of sincere repentance—*true contrition*—is very often lamentably neglected. Perfect contrition is a very rare

virtue. It presupposes a profound knowledge of the divine perfections, as well as of our own sinfulness.

1. The contrition must be *interior*. It will not suffice to read the act of contrition out of a prayer-book, if we have not a deep sorrow in our hearts. A contrite soul is full of bitter grief ; it hates and detests all its sins, and desires nothing more earnestly than to be delivered and cleansed from their spiritual leprosy. It may not vent its grief in tears and groans ; but, as St. Chrysostom says : “ One must be on his guard not to deceive himself in this matter, for I have seen many who fasted and wept and beat their breasts and wore hair-cloth, so that one would be certain that they were penetrated by true contrition, judging by their external conduct ; but they were not true penitents, because their interior disposition did not correspond with their exterior acts.” “ A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit : a contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” (Ps. 50 : 19.)

2. True contrition, furthermore, must be *universal*, including all the sins which we have committed. Each mortal sin is a never-ending evil which removes us from God, and severs the bonds of divine grace. Each mortal sin is deserving of the eternal torments of hell. Therefore, each one must be repented of, and renounced. True it is, that for the forgiveness of sins, it is not necessary that we should make a special act of contrition for each individual sin, (although such a practice would be very conducive to the amendment of our lives,) but our sorrow must extend to every sin, none excepted. Otherwise, how could we be, at the same time, the friend and the enemy of God ? How could we repent and not repent ? Therefore, the prophet says : “ If the wicked do penance for all his sins, living, he shall live, and shall not die.” (Ezech. 18 : 21.)

3. The motives for perfect contrition must be *supernatural*. No temporal considerations, such as shame, terrors of conscience, or the loss of earthly goods, of fortune, health, or honor, will suffice. Perfect contrition must be rooted in faith, and in the love of God. It must proceed from considerations on the loss of divine grace and salvation, on the slavery of the devil, or the punishments of hell. Every other contrition is insufficient for the obtaining of the forgiveness of sins. “ Be converted to me with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning. And rend your hearts, and not your garments.” (Joel 2 : 12, 13.) “ Do penance, and be baptized every one of you.” (Acts 2 : 38.)

If the examination of the conscience is the penance of the understanding which has turned aside from God, our highest Aim, contrition

is the penance of the heart, that detaches itself from sins, and, in bitter grief, deplores its fault. It is, therefore, the second step on the ladder by which we ascend to reconciliation with God. But how much is this penance of the heart neglected! How many confessions are invalid for the want of the necessary contrition! What again, is the motive of many a confession and act of contrition? Is it the love of God, or the loss of one's own salvation? Is it sorrow for having offended him, the highest Good? Or is it not rather a fear of the punishment of hell, a dread of the temporal consequences of sin, which stir up a few sparks of repentance in so many hearts? Some are more influenced by the stings of present shame, than by the loss of future eternal happiness. To forfeit the friendship of man concerns them more than the loss of God's love. No, no, natural motives do not suffice for the obtaining of supernatural grace and holiness. Such penitents return to their houses unjustified, unforgiven.

Often the repentance of the heart is but a partial one. Some penitents go to confession, and, indeed, repent of some sins, or the greater number of their sins, but they are too deeply and too strongly entangled in the bonds of some favorite sins, to tear themselves free: they imagine such a divorce to be too difficult if not altogether impossible. They have not the courage to break with all the occasions and dangers of evil, to avoid certain places and persons. They fear the judgment of the world or some great temporal loss. They are ready to do all whatsoever God and holy Faith commands them, but one or the other sin they will commit again. They promise to God and to their confessors to avoid all faults and sinful occasions, but in thought they except their favorite sins. Such penitents resemble Lot's wife whom the angel of the Lord sought to lead out of the burning city, but who turned into a pillar of salt in the middle of the road to safety. She looked backwards and forwards at the same time, and the guiding hand of the angel deserted her. Like the Israelites in the desert, who longed for the fleshpots of Egypt, irresolute, faint-hearted penitents are unwilling to part with their former sins. He who strives to make a covenant at one and the same time with God and Satan will sink at last into the abyss of hell. God despises a divided heart.

III. The penance of the understanding and of the heart must be completed by *the penance of the will*. It is not enough to know our sins, neither is it sufficient to repent of them, they must also be removed and ejected out of the heart. This is done by our confession of them, and the subsequent amendment of our lives. This part of penance is the most repugnant to man. Human pride revolts against the avowal of sin. Many penitents would rather undertake the severest penitential works than accuse themselves of their sins.

1. *Pride* and *self-love* arise in the soul and refuse to make an humble and repentant confession. Some behold in the priest more the man than the consecrated minister and representative of Jesus Christ. "Why should I tell my sins and faults to a fellow creature? Why should I humiliate myself so deeply?" exclaims corrupt nature. Full of pride, many go against their will, and under compulsion, to the confessional. The advice which the priest gives, does not please them; and they are delighted when the disagreeable task is over, not to be repeated for a long time to come.

2. From this pride and self-love, springs a false shame which deters many from making an entire confession. Some penitents are honest up to a certain point, until they reach some sin which it appears too difficult for them to disclose. "What will my confessor think of me?" they ask in the anxiety of their hearts; and, while they are too timid to accuse themselves honestly of all their sins, they possess the awful courage to tell a lie to the Holy Ghost. Instead of being absolved from their sins, they come out of the confessional laden with new chains; and, what is still more terrible, the chains become heavier and more binding from one confession to the other. Will he, who overcome by a false shame, has refused to accuse himself of his sins in one confession, find it easier in the next? How often do such persons go about for years, secreting this poison in their hearts! Although continually tortured by it, they have not the courage to eject it out of their mouths! How many have gone into eternity with such concealed sins unconfessed, either because courage was wanting at the hour of death, or because they were deprived of the power of confessing them.

Most maliciously and cunningly, the devil makes use of their false shame to lead men to make bad confessions. Truth and falsehood, accusation and silence are hopelessly mingled in such confessions. He induces them to make use of ambiguous expressions which may mean anything or nothing. From this same source, proceed all those evasions and subtuges behind which human vanity seeks to shelter itself, confessing the sins, and still not wishing to be recognized as a sinner. Oh, how wretched is the poor creature, who, to the eternal injury of his soul listens to the suggestions and whispers of Satan!

3. Will such proud and incomplete confessions insure us forgiveness? Certainly not; for a contrite accusation of our sins is one of the necessary conditions of divine pardon. Our Saviour has intrusted to us, his representatives, the office of his judges. We are either to loose or to bind. How can we know what we shall forgive or retain, if we do not know the sins? If our power was only that of loosing, then it would only be necessary for the penitent to approach the tribunal and demand



absolution. But the judgment which the confessor must give presupposes the avowal of the sins in detail. The poison which has penetrated into the soul must be ejected by the confession of the mouth, if the penitent would expect a cure. Not only the upper branches of the noxious tree must be lopped off, but it must be dragged up by the roots, in order to wither altogether in the sun's light and heat. Pride is the germ of every sin ; and therefore, penance must begin and end in humility. He who is filled with a penitential spirit does not find it difficult to accuse himself of his sins. His anxious and sin-laden conscience compels him to confess his guilt ; and he willingly endures the shame he feels, as a part of his penance.

Candor and truth are great and noble virtues. He who is not ashamed to acknowledge a fault, has a noble heart, and deserves the love and forgiveness of his God. The Christian penitent says with St. Peter : " Lord, wash not only my feet, but also my hands and head." ( John 13 : 9.) In order to be thoroughly cleansed, and to have a part in Christ, he lays open his whole heart before his confessor, and makes known to him all his faults and needs. By a full confession, he tears up the smallest rootlets of sin out of his heart, so that the joy of heaven over his conscience may be perfect.

" Before this tribunal, where mercy sits on the throne," says St. Augustine, " it is sufficient that I confess what I am, in order to become what I am not." By a sincere confession of our sins, we employ our tongues in the manner most acceptable to God and most profitable to ourselves. The human tongue has received a higher sanctification since Christ the Son of God vouchsafed to pray and to bless with a human tongue. It is the altar upon which is laid the Incarnate God when he enters under our roof in the divine Food of the Holy Communion. At the Last Day, it will again be re-animated. Therefore, never let us prostitute such a consecrated member to sin, but let us make such use of it as its high destiny demands. Let it be to us the means of honoring and glorifying God. Let it be the key which shall open to our sin-stained hearts the gates of heaven. Amen.

BISHOP EHRLER.



## TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOR.

*"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."* (Luke 10 : 15)

To-day, we have to treat of one of the most important matters. "For he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law." (Rom. 13 : 8.) But "Who is my neighbor?" the lawyer asks our Saviour in the Gospel. The Jews falsely imagined that, under the name of *neighbor*, they were obliged to love only their friends, and not their enemies ; their acquaintances, but not strangers. Great was their mistake ! We are all brethren in Christ, dearly beloved ; and have but one Father in heaven, our Creator, God, the Father of all. Whoever is created by God is our neighbor, and as such we are obliged to love him. This commandment embraces every one, and extends to all without any exception. But, as St. Bernard teaches, it is a love that consists

I. *In exterior good works* : and

II. *In interior good will.*

I. Our Saviour inculcates love of our neighbor in external works :

1. *By his example,*

2. *And he commands the same in his new law.*

1. "God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son." (John 3 : 16.) St. Chrysostom, commenting on this sentence, says the word *so* has here a particular meaning, inasmuch as it indicates not merely the love of God but the *manner* of his love. God not only commands us to love our neighbor, but *so* to love him as God has loved us. "I give you a new commandment," says Christ : "that you love one another as I have loved you." (John 13 : 34.) He repeats these words with greater force : "As I have loved you, that you also love one another." How, and in what manner has God loved us ? Was not this love a lively and active one ? Has it not manifested itself most plainly in external works ? You have seen the proofs of that love more clearly than I can express them in mere words. Go up in spirit to Mount Calvary ; there behold love expressed in works on the Tree of the Cross, and, at the same time, behold the greatest work of love.

Enough ! dear brethren. If God has *so* loved us, we must love each other ; and *so*, that is, in the same way—in works. If we cannot attain so high a degree of active love, let us, nevertheless, do what we can ; let us strive at least to acquire some few sparks of this sublime love, whose fiery excess consumed the Sacred Heart of our Saviour.

2. “ This is my commandment, that you love one another.” Mark this, my beloved brethren ! It is not a counsel, nor an arbitrary act, but a command, a work of necessity. A command which St. John so frequently repeated that his disciples were almost weary of hearing it and finally began to ask him, “ Master, why dost thou always say the same thing ? ” to which the Beloved Disciple of Christ returned this remarkable reply, “ Because it is a command of God ; and if this alone is done, it is enough,” for “ he who loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law.” We are commanded to keep this commandment not merely in thought, but in works, not simply in sentiment, but in very deed. Therefore, the Apostle says ;—“ Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so shall you fulfill the law of Christ.” (Gal. 6 : 2.) Our Saviour teaches us this active love by the beautiful parable of the Good Samaritan. The latter saw the wounded traveller, whose needs had been neglected by the priest and the Levite, and “ was moved with compassion.” Behold the interior love ! But this was not enough. “ Going up to him, he bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine and setting him upon his own beast, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.” (Luke 10 : 34.) Behold the love that is shown in good works, in active charity ! And this is commanded. For our Saviour, to-day, adds this similitude (or as some say, this authentic history of an actual event) to the commandment of love. He gives us the command, and at the same time, its interpretation. He teaches not only fraternal charity, but the manner of manifesting it.

II. It is the law of interior charity, that we love our neighbor as ourselves. But how do we love ourselves ? We desire for ourselves

1. *Everything good* ; and

2. *Nothing evil*. Well, the love of our neighbor must possess the same qualities.

1. “ Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” The meaning of this commandment is, you must love your neighbor, with a friendly love ; you must wish him everything good, not on your own, but on his account, in the same manner as you desire all good to yourself for your own sake, and not for any other. This manner of loving the neighbor has its origin in the love of God. For, as St. Augustine

teaches : "We love our neighbor as ourselves if we love God, for if we do not love God, we do not love ourselves." Again, he asks : "How shall we love God and how our neighbor?" I answer, we must love God more than ourselves, but our neighbor *as ourselves*"; we should wish and desire every good for him that we wish and desire for ourselves, especially eternal happiness. And as the perfection of the love of God consists in our loving God because he is God, so the love of the neighbor is perfect when we do not love him from selfish motives, on account of favors received or hoped for, nor because of the bonds of relationship, or natural affection, but because he is our brother in Jesus Christ,—made, as we are, in the image and likeness of God, our heavenly Father.

2. The obligation of wishing everything good to our neighbor must exclude all thought of evil in his regard. This motive likewise springs from a proper self-love. No one wishes evil to himself ; "for no man ever hated his own flesh." (Ephes. 5 : 29.) Hence, we must regard our neighbor, in the light the Sacred Text presents him to us, as "our brother and our flesh." (Gen. 37 : 27.) "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3 : 15) ; and this too, because one who hates his brother wishes his destruction, says St. Jerome. Let us, beloved brethren, sedulously root out from our hearts all evil thoughts and desires contrary to fraternal charity.

Do not ask with the lawyer in to-day's Gospel, "Master, what must I do to possess eternal life?" (Luke 10 : 25) for you now know the law of love ; you know the manner of practising this love ; you know too, the object of this love, your neighbor. "Yes, my children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth." (1 John 3 : 18.) Let us love all, without distinction. For we are all brothers, according to nature, the mother of us all. But how much more are those brethren who recognize in God the only one and their true Father ; who have received the one Spirit of holiness ; who have been led from the same abyss of darkness into the one and the same light of truth ! We can not love God without loving our neighbor ; on the contrary, we are assured that if we love our neighbor, we are the children of God. Our Saviour himself has made this the sign by which all his faithful followers may be recognized : "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another." (John 13 : 35.) Mark well ! he does not say, if you work miracles, if you have the spirit of prophecy—but if "*you have love one for another.*" By this love, one may distinguish the sheep of Christ from the flock of Satan. For God is charity, and "he that abideth in charity, abideth in God and God in him." (1 John 4 : 16.) Amen.

B.

## TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## THE THREEFOLD SIN OF AVARICE.

*"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and thy neighbor as thyself." (Luke 10 : 27.)*

The Gospel of this day tells us, that a certain lawyer having asked our Lord the following question : "Master, what must I do to possess eternal life?" received from Christ this pointed answer : "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind ; and thy neighbor as thyself."—"This do, and thou shalt live."—We, also, shall live—that is, obtain eternal life,—if we observe this first and most important commandment, which is the germ and root of all the others. Whosoever offends against it, commits a threefold sin,—a violation of the love of God, of the love of the neighbor, and of the love which he owes to himself. Unbelievers, blasphemers, and Sabbath-breakers sin against the love which they owe to God. Robbers, thieves, murderers, the malevolent, sin against the love of the neighbor. The intemperate, the angry, and the impure sin against the love which they owe to themselves, because by these vices they injure themselves.—But there is one sin which aims a deadly blow at all of these threefold duties, which outrageously violates the love of God, the love of the neighbor, and the lawful love of self. And what is this sin? It is *covetousness* or *avarice*. The miser loves neither God, his neighbor, nor himself ; he sins against all three. Of this vice, St. Chrysostom says : "*Avarice is the common enemy of all beings,*" and truly, for the avaricious man is

- I. *An enemy of God ;*
- II. *An enemy of his neighbor ; and*
- III. *An enemy of himself.*

I. In detailing to the Ephesians and the Colossians, those vices which exclude from the kingdom of heaven, St. Paul, in both Epistles, warns us against covetousness, as one of the number. In each, he adds what is worthy of all attention, "Know ye this, and understand," he writes to the Ephesians, "that no fornicator, nor unclean, nor covetous person, which is *a serving of idols*, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of God." (Ephes. 5 : 5.) To the Colossians he writes : "Mortify

your members, which are upon the earth : fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which *is the service of idols*. (Col. 3 : 5.) You see, in both Epistles the Apostle calls covetousness "*the service of idols*"; the covetous man, therefore, according to the Sacred Scripture, is an *idolater*, and, consequently, a *direct enemy of the one true God*.

1. This truth is evident. Idolatry consists in giving to a creature, or to a thing, the honor which belongs to God alone. Such idolaters were the heathens, who gave divine honor to images of wood or stone, of gold or silver, adoring them, bending the knee before them, and offering them sacrifice and incense.

It is true, the covetous man does not visibly set his idol on the altar—he does not bend the knee, nor offer incense before it ;—but he gives to money and riches all that honor which is due only to the living God. Examine his heart and his conduct, and you will see that if he does not adore images of gold or silver, he does still worse, for he adores gold and silver themselves, as his God.

Whatsoever a faithful Christian does for the honor and glory of God, the covetous man does for the love of money. God is the chief end and aim of his devoted servants ; all the wishes and thoughts of the covetous man are directed to money. Whilst the servant of God is intent upon pleasing God and promoting his honor, the miser only thinks and studies how he can enrich his treasure, and increase his usurious interests. That one experiences the greatest pleasure when he can entertain himself with God in prayer, or can hear or read something edifying of divine things ; but this one knows no greater joy, than when he can sit before his money-box, and feast his niggardly soul on its contents. That one accepts all pains and difficulties, regards neither contumely nor persecution, if he only can do something for the glory of God ; this one also bears reproach and persecution, if he only can draw some pecuniary advantage from it, and gratify his greed for gold. While to the rational man and the true Christian, God is his highest good, money and riches are the highest good of the avaricious man. He esteems and loves them more than God ; therefore, in truth, they are his God. If forced to make a choice between his money and his God, the miser gives up God and clings to his money. Judas acted thus. Thirty pieces of silver were dearer to him than his Lord and Master. Thus every covetous man acts. In order to get money, to increase his money, to keep his money, he is ready at any moment to give up his God, and disobey his divine will. Now, this is rank idolatry. Whether one worships an image of gold and silver (as the heathens did), or holds as his highest good the silver and gold in themselves (as many a covetous Christian does),



he is equally an idolater, by putting a creature or a thing in the place of God. "The covetous, indeed, detests idols of gold and silver, but he worships gold and silver as God." (Tertul.)

2. As the covetous man *loves riches more than God*, and thereby becomes guilty of idolatry, (the most detestable and greatest of sins), so he also *trusts more in riches than in God*. To him, the words of the Psalmist may be applied: "Behold the man that made not God his helper; but trusted in the abundance of his riches." (Ps. 51 : 9.) Our Saviour cautions us against this in the following words: "Be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on. Your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things. He that feedeth the fowls of the air, and clotheth the lilies of the field, will also take care of you." (Matth. 6 : 25, 26.) The believing Christian credits these words, and therefore does not give way to immoderate care and solicitude. But what does the covetous man do? Does he credit and trust the word of Christ? Does he put his confidence in God? Ah, no! He is in constant fear of coming want. He is continually occupied in heaping up money. For its acquisition, he does not scruple employing foul, as well as fair, means. Behind the flimsy veil of a prudent solicitude, he tries to hide his avarice from himself and others. He does not deny that he is more economical, more intent upon money-making, than others, but all this, he avers, is not from a love of gold, but in order to protect himself and family from need and want. But what else is it but idolatry, when one trusts more in money and goods than in God? God alone is the mighty helper who assists all that firmly trust in him. The miser's want of confidence only offers to God a fresh insult.

3. Since the covetous man does not love, and trust in, God, it is self-evident that *he does little or nothing for the honor of God*. If a church, a Catholic schoolhouse, or any charitable institution is to be erected or beautified, the good Christian is ready to contribute to such a purpose according to his ability, because such edifices tend to the glory of God. But the covetous man refuses to give a penny to such noble or charitable objects. Such an expenditure he regards as extravagance. When Mary of Bethania poured her precious ointment over the feet of Jesus, Judas, full of indignation, cried out: "Why was this waste of ointment made?" (Mark 14 : 4.) So speaks the miser of all ages and places, as often as there is question of giving something for God's honor.

The covetous man, as you perceive, loves only money, trusts only in money, acts only for the sake of money. He does nothing for God, he trusts not in God, he does not love God. Therefore, he shows



himself in every respect an enemy and adversary of God. What a damnable vice is covetousness !

Has this disgraceful vice any place in *your* heart ? Do you find a difficulty in spending your money for the cause of God ? Are you so solicitous for temporal things as to forget God, as to violate the divine commandments for the sake of money ? If so, look well to it ; for these are the marks of this hateful vice which always endeavors to hide itself. It is known by its fruits.

II. The covetous man is *the enemy of his neighbor*, as well as of God. Avarice is, of all vices, the most opposed to the love of one's neighbor.

1. *The avaricious man violates the duty of charity and mercy*, which, as a man and a Christian, he is bound to show towards his suffering fellow-man. Thousands of poor widows and orphans may pass before him ; they may embrace his knees, and, with bitter tears, implore him by all that is sacred to give them only a pittance of his abundance—but in vain. His stony heart is not moved by the miseries of the poor, nor softened by the tears of the needy. “ I cannot help it,” he says ; “ I need all that I have for myself. One must look out for the future. We must take care of Number One, no matter who else goes to the wall ! ” Hearken to the cruel and inhuman language of the miser ! Covetous and insatiable wretch ! does not the fate of your fellow-man really concern you ? Are you ignorant of your duty to assist your neighbor in necessity ? Have you never heard of the great reward which Christ has promised to the merciful,—of the severe punishments with which he threatens the unmerciful ? God has only given you riches that you may give of your abundance to the poor, and thus become the benefactor of your fellow-men. “ God, who is just, has so ordained that the rich shall give of their goods to the poor.” (St. Basil.) Overcome, then, your selfish avarice, and obey the ordinance of God.

2. *The miser not only does no good to his neighbor, but actually does him all evil*. When avarice has once taken possession of the heart of man, he strives and plans to gratify his passion, no matter at what sensible cost to the interest of others. No maneuver is too mean, no deceit too disgraceful, no transaction too abominable, if it only brings in money. He does not hesitate to cheat, or take advantage of, another. Short weight and measure, the sale of damaged wares for good, illicit traffic, unjust law-suits, are commonly the means he employs to enrich himself at the expense of his needy fellow-man. In a word, he fattens, like a vampire, upon the substance of the poor, and bathes, as it were, in the very sweat and tears of the afflicted.

3. Yes, it is avarice which violently dissolves those holy bonds which unite mankind most intimately together. What tie of nature is closer, or more indissoluble, than that of parent and child? Avarice tears it asunder. Does not many a covetous son begrudge his father a long life? Behold, again, those fond brothers and sisters, who have been reared in an atmosphere of perfect peace and concord! See how, as soon as avarice takes hold of them, they quarrel together, like brutes, over a trifling inheritance; they abuse and persecute each other, and ruin themselves mutually by long and weary law-suits. Is there any other vice more opposed to the love of the neighbor than avarice?

4. "Covetousness," says the Apostle, "is the root of all evils." (1 Tim. 6 : 10.) From the beginning nothing has caused so much evil in human society as avarice. For the sake of gold kings and princes have oppressed and ruined their subjects; for the sake of money the great ones of the world have become the vilest traitors to their land and to their people; for the love of money magistrates and judges have sold justice to the highest bidder. Alas! the love of mammon has given rise to the greatest disturbances, even in the Church. Because of selfish greed the holiest laws were trodden under foot and the most outrageous doctrines preached. Truly, covetousness is the root of all evils.

But the shamefulfulness of this vice does not prevent it from being universal. Are there not here among us, my brethren, some unhappy ones who are unfeeling and hard-hearted in their dealings with their fellow-men, who shrink not from injustice and deception in order to overreach them? Ah, let such speedily divest themselves of that covetous spirit, and give place, henceforth, to a generous, open-handed love of God and their neighbor.

III. The miser is *his own greatest enemy*. The avaricious is good to no one, but he is the worst towards himself." These are the words of Seneca, a wise man among the heathens. And, in effect, if we consider a covetous man, we find

1. *That he embitters for himself the present life; and*
2. *That he deprives himself hereafter of the joys of eternal life!*

1. Is a miser's life a pleasant one? By no means. His days are full of *labors, cares, and pains*.

(a.) *Labors*. Does not the avaricious man work all day, and often watch through long nights, without rest and repose? Does he not exhaust himself with excessive toil? Every man, indeed, must work, (according to the Sacred Scripture); and labor has been the destiny of

man from the beginning, even in Paradise. But Holy Writ further teaches us that the fruits of labor are not only destined to serve for our support, but also to procure for us some pleasures of life. Thus we read : " This hath seemed good to me, that a man should eat, and drink, and enjoy the fruit of his labor." (Ecclus. 5 : 17.) Hence, labor is useless, even blameworthy, and becomes the punishment of man, if he does not use it as reason and religion require. But this is the lot of the miser. He labors, toils, and fatigues himself ; he gathers and accumulates greater and greater riches. But, making no use of what he has gathered, he either locks it up, or lends it out on a high interest. Though his gain daily increases, he gives himself no rest nor convenience ; he shuts his heart against every, even lawful, joy, and leads a hard, rough, penurious life. Is not this to persecute one's self, to be one's own greatest enemy ? Can you imagine anything more foolish than to consume one's self in the acquisition of riches, and then live a life of grinding poverty ! What is more foolish than to collect money, but to deny one's self the use of it, since it obtains its value only from its use ?

*b. Cares.* The miser is constantly tormented with anxiety lest what he already has may not suffice. Hence, he is unceasingly solicitous to accumulate more and more money and possessions. " When I have acquired this," he says, " I shall be without care." And when he possesses what he so ardently desired, does his care cease ? Far from it. Fresh anxieties daily arise to torment him. And if he be sincere, he must exclaim with Solomon, the richest of kings : " I saw in all things vanity, and vexation of mind." (Ecclus. 2 : 11.)

*c. Pains.* The covetous man desires to become rich. For this reason, he labors and exhausts his strength. Now, if, in spite of all his labor and energy, he does not obtain the object of his desire, does not become rich, what anguish he suffers ! Or, if, having obtained it, he loses it by accident, or his own imprudence, what pain, again, for him !

The avaricious man will tell you he labors in order to enrich his family. But what, if God do not give him children, or, having them, if the divine will doom his heirs to an early death ? What bitter pain for him to see his wealth about to pass into strange hands ! A pain which the Sacred Scripture calls a great misery, saying : " A man to whom God has given great riches—but a stranger shall eat it up. This is a great misery." (Ecclus. 6 : 2.) Or what pain is it for him to see that his son is a spendthrift, who will soon squander all the money he has taken years to hoard up ! And, alas ! worst pain of all,—what will he not suffer when death approaches, and destroys all his plans and projects, violently tearing him away from those goods to which his soul

cleaves. This pain, Christ declares to be the special punishment of the covetous man. "This night they shall demand thy soul of thee, but whose shall be what thou hast provided?" Thus the avaricious man, or the miser, has nothing good on earth, he denies himself every enjoyment and prepares for himself only labors, cares and pains. Even here on earth, he is poor and miserable.

2. But poorer and more miserable still is *his lot in the next world.*" "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into heaven." (Matth. 19 : 24.) By these words, our Saviour means to express, how hard, how almost impossible, it is for an avaricious man to save his soul. And, in fact, experience proves and teaches, that all those means by which other sinners are usually converted, prove ineffectual with the miser: Avarice so completely hardens the human heart, that nothing avails to move, soften, or convert it. The history of the unhappy Judas teaches this truth most emphatically. He it was, among the twelve Apostles, that held the purse and provided for the temporal necessities of the little flock. He was not honest, as the Sacred Scripture expressly declares. When Mary Magdalene anointed the feet of the Lord with precious unction, he said: "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" (John 12 : 5.) One might think from these words that Judas was very generous. But St. John expressly adds: "He said this, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief." (John 12 : 6.) As such, he would have been better pleased, if the ointment had been sold; for, the price thereof, having filled his purse, he might have kept a good part of it for himself, under the pretence of having given it to the poor. His heart was attached to money, and after avarice had once taken possession of his soul, nothing was able to rescue him from eternal perdition. When John and James contended for precedence in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus cured them of their pride by simply saying to them: "You know not what you ask." In order to move Peter to repentance after his denial, one glance of the Lord sufficed. Jesus looked at him, and he went out and wept bitterly. To heal Thomas of his unbelief, he made him touch the marks of his wounds, and he, at once converted, exclaimed with a believing heart: "My Lord and my God." But the sin of Judas was incurable, because he refused to make use of the means which alone could save him from perdition. Christ had preached, by word and deed, the contempt of earthly things, no less to him than to the other Apostles, when he said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." He had promised no less to him than to the others, a great reward in heaven for leaving all things for the love of God. "Every one that hath left house, or brethren, or

sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundred-fold, and shall possess life everlasting." (Matth. 19 : 29.) After these general admonitions, which were addressed to all the Apostles, the Lord, on many occasions, gave vent to certain earnest and sorrowful expressions, which were meant for Judas alone. Before any one, save that false disciple, could surmise what or who was meant by his words, Christ had said : "Have I not chosen you twelve ; and of you one is a devil ?" (John 6 : 71.) These words should have pierced the heart of the unhappy traitor, and cured his blindness. At the Last Supper, when full of love for his disciples, Jesus washed the feet of the twelve, he said again : "You are clean, but not all." Therewith, he again sought to touch Judas' heart, and restrain him from his treacherous designs. And having spoken these words of warning, the Lord fell upon his knees, and washed the feet of Judas with as much affection and tenderness, as if he were his greatest friend. Such conduct should have been capable of softening the stoniest of hearts, but alas ! it had no other effect save to harden him the more in guilt. The thirty pieces of silver had already dazzled and blinded his guilty eyes and heart.

But Christ was not content with these warnings; he went farther, and mentioned the crime of Judas publicly : "Amen, amen I say to you : That one of you will betray me." And to make the wretched man understand the greatness of the crime he was about to commit, our Lord added : "The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but wo to that man by whom the Son of man shall be betrayed. It were better for that man if he had not been born." (Matth. 26 : 24.) These words he spoke at the Last Supper. And again, he said : "Amen, I say to you, that one of you is about to betray me. And they being very much troubled, began every one to say : "Is it I, Lord ?" And when Judas had the impudence to ask "Is it I, Rabbi ?" Jesus replied to him : "Thou hast said it"; yet, so that the others did not understand it. His crime was still unknown to his brethren. O tender and divine indulgence ! capable of touching and converting the most perverse heart ! But Judas remained obstinate. He no longer felt at home in the society of Jesus and of his disciples; he wished to go away. And after receiving the morsel, after receiving unworthily the body of the Lord, it is said: The devil entered into him, and he went out. Now the measure of grace was full, and the Lord said to him : "That which thou doest, do quickly." No, another grace is given him, in the very moment when, in the Garden of Gethsemane, he seeks to execute his nefarious design : "Friend, why art thou come hither ? Dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss ?"

What shall we admire most ? The love of the Redeemer, who employs every means in order to restrain his unfortunate disciple from



crime and perdition, or the latter's obduracy and blindness which rejects every remedy to the terrible end? Learn from Judas how hard, how almost impossible, it is, to convert a man who has once abandoned himself to the vice of covetousness; and considering in his case the evil effects and sad consequences of avarice, let your hearts be filled with a profound horror of this most shameful vice. Attach not your affections to money or the other perishable goods of this earth. Thereby you become the enemies of God, the enemies of your fellow-men, and the greatest enemies of yourselves. God alone must we love; and on heavenly things, alone, must we set our hearts. If we truly love God, we shall also love ourselves, and our neighbors. Through the observance of this threefold commandment, we shall obtain that best and highest of all gifts—life everlasting. Amen.

J. S.

## FESTIVAL OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

## THE MERITS AND INTERCESSION OF THE HEAVENLY QUEEN.

*"In the holy city . . . I rested, and my power was in Jerusalem."*  
(Ecclus. 24:15.)

After Christ ascended into heaven, his blessed Mother remained at Jerusalem, persevering in prayer with the disciples, till with them she had received the Holy Ghost. St. John, to whom Christ recommended her on the cross, took her under his protection. She lived to a very advanced age, advancing daily in the perfection of divine love, and in the heroic exercise of all other virtues. At last, she paid the common debt of nature,—none among the children of Adam being exempt from that rigorous law. But if the death of the Saints is rather to be called a sweet sleep than death; how much more that of the Queen of Saints, who had been exempt from all sin!

1. It is a pious tradition that, by a singular privilege, the body of the Blessed Virgin, three days after her death, was raised from the grave and assumed to the glory of Paradise. This preservation from corruption, and speedy assumption to glory, seem justly due to that sacred body which was never defiled by any sin, that virginal body from which the Eternal Word received his own adorable flesh, and whose members and organs were venerable to him, as those of his own incomparable Mother.

2. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is the greatest of all the festivals which the Church celebrates in her honor. It is the consummation of all the other great mysteries of her marvelous life; it is the birthday of her true greatness and glory, and the coronation of all the virtues which we admire and reverence singly in her other feasts. It is for all these gifts conferred on her that we are on this day to praise and thank him, who is their Author, but especially for that glory wherewith he has crowned her. In this, we unite our joyful homages with all the blessed spirits in heaven. What must have been their exultation and triumph on this occasion! With what resplendent pomp and ceremony must not God himself have welcomed his beloved Mother to his kingdom! The white-robed Saints, the myriad

choirs of loving Angels, seeing the graces with which she was adorned, and the dazzling beauty and luster which arrayed her as she mounted upward, from the earth, cried out in amazement: "Who is this that cometh from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved?" Accustomed as they were to the wonders of heaven, in which God displays the magnificence of his power and wisdom, they were nevertheless astonished to behold the glory of Mary, and much more so to see the earth which had been loaded with maledictions and covered with monsters of abomination and horror, now produce so peerless a treasure and send forth to them so rich a present. "Blessed art thou, O earth!" they exclaim, "for having given birth to this matchless creature! But more blessed art thou, O heaven, since thou shalt be her dwelling-place for all eternity!"

3. Whilst we, my brethren, contemplate with profound sentiments of veneration, astonishment and praise the glory to which Mary is raised by her triumph on this day, we ought for our own advantage and imitation, to consider by what means she arrived at this sublime degree of honor and happiness. That she should be the Mother of her Creator was the most wonderful miracle, and the highest dignity that could be conferred on a creature, yet it was not properly this privilege that God crowned in her. Mary's glory in heaven is not due to her miraculous Maternity, but to her correspondence to grace, to her good works, to her love of God, in a word, to her fidelity as a Christian. The blessed Virgin Mary, like every other Saint, gained heaven only as a reward of merit. Now, she could not merit it by becoming the Mother of God. Her being Mother of God is, indeed, a great dignity, but there is no merit attached to it. It was her virtue that God considered in the recompense he bestowed upon her; herein, he regarded her charity, her profound humility, her purity, her patience, her meekness, her holy zeal and ardor in paying to God the most perfect homage of adoration, love, praise, and thanksgiving. *Charity or the love of God, is the queen and the most excellent of all virtues*—no other virtue being meritorious to eternal life, unless it be animated by, and proceed from, the motive of charity. In this consists the perfection of all true sanctity. Mary surpassed all others in sanctity in proportion as she excelled them in the most pure, ardent, and most perfect charity. But if charity was the perfection of her eminent sanctity, its groundwork was her sincere and profound humility. This was the source of her transcendent charity, as well as the channel of all her virtues. This chiefly attracted God from the seat of his glory into her chaste womb; and raised her in the end to the highest throne among the Blessed. She was exalted in virtue, in dignity and glory above all other pure and mere creatures, because she was of all others the most humble.

4. Meekness and patience are the twin-sisters and inseparable companions of humility. By these, was Mary to purchase her great crown ; and, to furnish her with occasions for the perfect exercise of these and all other virtues in the most heroic degree, God was pleased to visit her with the sharpest trials. Though she was the Mother of God, never defiled with the least stain of sin, and, by a singular grace, free from concupiscence—yet she was not exempt from the cross of her Son. Nay, the closer and more intimate the relations she bore to him, the dearer and more precious she was in his sight, so much the more overflowing was the bitter cup he pressed to her pure lips. Though she had no sins to satisfy for, yet her virtue was to be exercised and improved by trials. Besides these reasons for suffering, we, who are criminal sinners, have immense debts to cancel, an unruly concupiscence to control, and a fund of inordinate self-love to combat and subdue. Yet, we would live without mortification and suffering, and are inclined to murmur at what should be the object of our joy and ambition ! God was pleased to conduct his own dear Mother through hard and rigorous ways of virtue, that her example might be a model and consolation to us under interior trials. The latter are painful to nature, but they are the ordinary exercise of heroic souls in pure and perfect love. Consolations, even those that are spiritual, are rather supports of our weakness, than the test and school of solid virtue, the character of which is to suffer with patience and constancy. If prosperity be uninterrupted, it exposes souls to much illusion, fills them with self-love, and flatters them with the fancy that they are walking with God, and reaping the fruits of virtue. The road of privations is the most secure as well as the most fruitful in heroic virtues. Certainly, nothing can be more sublime or better for us, seeing God had nothing greater for his Mother. This consideration alone should suffice to fill us with comfort and joy under all afflictions. In the way of suffering, we are in good company, yes, even with Christ himself, with his Blessed Mother and his Saints, who have all walked this path before us, carrying those heavy crosses which won for them a superb and fadeless crown.

5. Let us consider a little the life of Mary. What must she not have suffered from the hardships of poverty, the alarming persecution of Herod, the banishment into Egypt, living after her return in a kind of exile for fear of Archelaus ! Under these, and many like circumstances, we may easily imagine what continual crosses she had to bear, together with her divine Infant. What were her emotions beholding him in want, suffering, cold, and all other inconveniences. What, when she lost him in the Temple ; and saw him exposed to hardships and ill-treatment on other occasions ! He was persecuted and reviled

by the Pharisees and others, his meekness despised, and his most holy doctrine contradicted. It was a continual affliction to her tender heart, always full of zeal for the honor of God and charity for men, to see the whole world filled with sins, blasphemies against so good a God, scandals, abuses, wrecks of souls. But what was her grief to see her most amiable and divine Son in his sacred Passion, covered with ignominies, overwhelmed with the blackest calumnies, scourged, crowned with thorns, and dying on a cross! How sharp a sword of most bitter grief must have pierced the soul of this Mother of sorrows! After her divine Son left the earth, how earnest were her desires to be united with him in glory! How bitter must have been the prolongation of her exile in the midst of a sinful world, when her burning charity surpassed that of all the Saints and Angels of Paradise! The weight and duration of these crosses, and the great virtues which she practised under them, are the measure of that height of glory to which she is now exalted. We see the means by which Mary mounted to that happiness which she now enjoys. No other way is open to us. The same path which conducted her to glory, will also lead us thither. We shall be partners in her reward, if we but imitate her virtues. Her example is both our model and our encouragement.

6. From her assumption we derive another great advantage, that of her patronage. Mary crowned in heaven, is a powerful advocate with her Son in favor of us sinners. The prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary whilst she lived on earth were certainly of great efficacy, much more than those of Abraham, Job, and Elias. Now, raised to the state of bliss, she cannot have lost the power to intercede with God for us; on the contrary, since she is now seated near the throne of mercy, the might of her mediation must be much greater. If the Angels who are before the throne of God, offer our prayers to him and pray themselves for us, shall not the most holy Mother of God be able to do us the same sweet and blessed office? Can any one be so bold or blasphemous as to pretend, either that she is not willing or that she cannot exert her charity in our behalf? That she is most ready and desirous, no one can doubt, seeing that among all pure creatures, there never was any zeal or charity equal to hers, who bore Charity itself in her immaculate womb. It was from him who came to cast fire on the earth that she received that zeal for the glory of God, and those bowels of tenderness and compassion for the souls of poor sinners, which surpassed those of all Angels and men.

Now she beholds the divine Essence, and is made all love by being transformed in glory and united to him who is Love itself; now she sees all that can inflame her charity both as regards our miseries, God's goodness, and the glory which will redound to him from our salvation.



Can she then forget us? No, certainly. With her zeal for the divine honor and her charity for poor sinners, her compassion for us must be increased. Nor can she have less power with her Son; since, the more she is honored by him, the more potent must her intercession become. If Esther could prevail with Assuerus in favor of her nation, if the Tecuit could move David to show mercy to Absalom, if Judith could save her people by her prayers, if the Saints both on earth and reigning with Christ in heaven could often avert the divine vengeance, and work wonders for men, what may we not obtain through the mediation of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, the crowned Queen of heaven and of earth?

## ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

## THE MEANS TO SECURE A HOLY DEATH.

*"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his Saints."* (Ps. 115 : 15.)

Although the thought of death is generally most terrible, yet, to-day, on the feast of the commemoration of the death of Mary, death loses the greater part of its terrors and bitterness. We need no longer describe it as "A day of wrath . . . a day of darkness and obscurity," (Soph. 1 : 15) but we may call it a day of joy, a day of blissful anticipation and consoling hope.

But why is the death of Mary such a "precious" death? Holy Writ answers this question; for the royal prophet exclaims in one of his psalms: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his Saints." Yes, my dear brethren, because Mary was most richly endowed with grace, with which she fully co-operated, and through the fulness of which she became rich in virtues, she could consider her death as a precious sacrifice in the eyes of God, find in it, in the hour of her departure, that peace and joy which enabled her to cry out triumphantly: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" (1 Cor. 15 : 54, 55.) But considering more closely the precious moment of Mary's death, we shall find therein two circumstances which made death easy and consoling to our Blessed Lady. She had nothing to fear or regret

I. *From the remembrance of the past ; or*

II. *From the consideration of the future.*

I. You have read in Bible History of the wicked and cruel king Antiochus who blasphemed the Most High, profaned and pillaged the Temple in Jerusalem, desecrated the holy city itself, and inhumanly persecuted the Jewish people. As long as he sat securely upon his throne and wallowed in earthly apparent happiness, he never regarded these things as sins. But lo ! the hour of death approaches. His eyes no longer see his once-loved riches, honors, and pleasures, he beholds only the sins of his past life. His long-hidden iniquities are laid bare in all their horrid deformity. Listen to the sighs and lamentations of that wretched king ! Addressing his friends he moans out in his

agony : " Sleep is gone from my eyes ; and I am fallen away ; and my heart is cast down for anxiety ; and I said in my heart : Into how much tribulation am I come, and into what floods of sorrow, wherein now I am : I that was pleasant and beloved in my power. But now I remember the evils that I have done in Jerusalem . . . . I know therefore that for this cause these evils have found me." (Mach. 6 : 10-13.)

These and similar reflections will occur to each dying sinner, when the solemn light of the blessed candle reveals the long great array of his past sins, which, with a culpable carelessness, he did not account as sinful those offences, which he sought to palliate by a thousand excuses those crimes, which he, indeed, confessed, but for which his contrition and penance were inadequate.

Very different was it with Mary, the Mother of God. Upon her death-bed, she had nothing to repent of, for she had practised nothing but good, and had omitted nothing but sin. The remembrance of the past—of a life spent in holiness—made her death "precious." As a maiden, we find her in the Temple, among the consecrated virgins, wholly given up to prayer and meditation. We see with what vigilance she guarded her chastity. The Angel of the Lord appeared to her in prayer, and, when he announced to her her dignity as Mother of the Most High, although filled with astonishment, she yet would have refused this overwhelming honor if she had not been permitted, at the same time, to preserve her virginity. As the faithful spouse of Joseph we admire her patience and humility, when her holy consort is about to desert her on account of an excusable, but false, suspicion. When the inhabitants of Bethlehem refuse her a shelter, and she is forced to take refuge in a stable as the birth-place of her Divine Son, we hear from her neither complaint nor desire of revenge—she has only pardon and pity for her enemies. And how conscientiously did she perform all her maternal duties ! Let us take only one example. For three long days, she sought her Son with sorrow, and rested not until she had found him in the Temple. Her love of her neighbor was displayed at the marriage of Cana. Her fidelity to Jesus, her self-denial and mortification were shown in the constancy with which she accompanied her divine Son to the place of execution, and stood by his cross until the last cruel moment of his life. These are only a few traits in the life of our Blessed Lady; but they suffice to show us that, at the hour of death, she could look back upon the past with peace and confidence. Therefore, her death was blessed and precious, not tortured by a disturbed conscience, not terrified at the thought of having offended the God of everlasting love. She was able to surrender her soul into the hands of her Maker, as pure and immaculate as it was when she received it from him; comforted by the invisible presence of Jesus,

who encouraged her in her last hour by these words : " Thou art all fair, O my love ; and there is not a spot in thee." (Cant. 4 : 7 ) And what were her thoughts about the future ?

II. The holy Arsenius, at the hour of death, was overcome by an indescribable fear; he saw, at a glance, the severity and justice of the judgments of God, and was so overwhelmed with terror at the sight, that it seemed as if he would expire with fear. His disciples, full of astonishment, approached him, and said : " Holy Father Arsenius, dost *thou* tremble ? " " Yes, I tremble," he answered, " and I have not begun, to-day, to do so, for, during more than forty years, I have never ceased to fear the judgment of God. For, know ye, that if the just can scarcely be saved, where shall the sinner and the wicked appear ? "

Dearly beloved, if a saint trembled thus at the approach of death and the consideration of the future, how will it be with *us* ? Terrible is that hour when the soul anxiously straining forward, seeks to penetrate the life beyond the grave, remembers that it not only must bid farewell to all it holds most dear, here below, but that it must also undergo a severe judgment upon its arrival in the other world ! There she sees the Judge, no other, alas ! than our Lord Jesus Christ, whom she has offended by so many sins, whose divine eye searches the heart and reins, and before whose justice no distinction of persons avails. It is his judgment, that shall bestow upon us eternal happiness, or condemn us to everlasting woe. Which of these will be our fate ? We do not know whether we are worthy of love or hatred, and even if we are conscious of nothing—yet we are not justified; yes, even if we have done all that we could, we must yet, according to the admonition of Christ, confess that we are but unprofitable servants.

But, if we sinners tremble at the thought of meeting the future Judge of the living and the dead, on the other hand, the departing soul of Mary glowed with ardent longings to see, once more, face to face, her divine Son; she yearned to behold the power and majesty with which he sits at the right hand of his Father. It was prophesied to the mother of the tyrant Nero, that she would be murdered by the hand of her own son upon his accession to the imperial throne. " Well then," said she, " he may kill me, after I have once had the joy of seeing him made Emperor ! " Thus great was the sinful joy of a mother, at the thought of the temporal prosperity of her son ; how much greater then must have been the delight of Mary, how much more blissful her hope when she saw the hour approach which would reveal to her the eternal glory of her Son, whom here, upon earth, she had beheld despised, persecuted, and condemned to an ignominious death !

But not only the thought of the glory of her divine Son rendered death sweet to her,—she also rejoiced in the firm hope that on account of the angelic purity of her life, and her faithful imitation of Jesus Christ, she should become a sharer in his happiness in the most eminent degree as the Queen of heaven. What creature could be preferred before her who bore the Son of God? Therefore her soul was filled with an ardent and holy longing for this highest possible degree of glory, so that she might be most intimately united to her divine Son, and might love him most perfectly.

Mary's death also brought nearer the realization of another hope—the hope that her soul and body would soon be reunited, and both become sharers in her heavenly glory. Could she believe that that body which had borne the Son of the Most High, which had been conceived without original sin, and had never been tarnished by a breath of actual sin, could be given over to the rottenness and corruption of the grave? No; she could indulge the hope that the omnipotence of her Son would soon re-unite her separated soul and body, and enthrone both in the glory of his kingdom. This, her hope, was realized. It is an ancient and pious tradition of the Church that after her death, the Apostles buried the Mother of their Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane. Three days after, St. Thomas, (who had been absent from the burial,) wishing to see and venerate her precious remains, had the tomb reopened, when, behold, there was nothing found in it but a marvelous growth of flowers, and the fine linen cloth in which they had wrapped her immaculate body. That most holy body had been carried to heaven by the Angels. Truly, this hope, together with all the other consolations which she enjoyed, must have delighted our Lady's heart at the last hour and rendered her death, indeed, most "precious in the sight of the Lord."

O, let us endeavor to make our death likewise "precious." This can be done by preserving our baptismal innocence. To this end, my dear Christians, you should frequently reflect on the white robe with which you were clothed at your baptism, on the burning light, which was placed in your hands, on the words which were then spoken by the priest: "Receive this white garment, and see thou carry it without stain before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou mayest have eternal life." And again: "Receive this burning light, and keep thy baptism so as to be without blame: keep the commandments of God, that when the Lord shall come to the nuptials, thou mayest meet him in the company of all the Saints, in the heavenly court, and have eternal life, and live forever and ever." Amen.



## THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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 IMPURITY.

*"And as he entered into a certain town, there met him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off." (Luke 17 : 12.)*

Our Saviour in to-day's Gospel is represented as meeting ten lepers, just at the entrance to a certain town of Judea. The number of these unfortunate men and the nature of their disease, are alike full of singular significance. Leprosy is a loathsome, contagious, and incurable disorder ; and is a lively image of the terrible sin of Lust. As there were *ten* lepers, so the impure man violates, as it were, all the ten commandments of God, there being scarcely any sin in the whole catalogue of crime, which does not originate from lust, or to which it will not lead. Beloved Christians, we must now examine the vileness of this vice, this abominable malady of the soul. Perhaps, alas ! some among you may be already infected with this contagious disorder ? If so, let them cry out with the ten lepers, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us !" And let the innocent and clean of heart continually pray to God, exclaiming, "Lord ! 'deliver us from evil,' and preserve us from it eternally." This vice is most certainly

I. *A horrible image of present reprobation; and*

II. *A sure sign of a future eternal hell.*

I. Impure souls are,

1. *Already subjects of the devil ; and*
2. *They are terribly tortured by him even in this life.*

1. God said, "My spirit shall not remain in man, because he is flesh." (Gen. 6 : 3.) "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh" (Gal. 5 : 17); consequently, God, as the purest of Spirits, is opposed to nothing a more than to impurity. If by the sin of impurity, we refuse obedience to God, to whom do we become subject ? Man becomes more a subject of Satan through impurity, than through any other vice. St. Ambrose when interpreting the words of the Apostle, "Fly fornication," says, "The Apostle with justice commands us to fly fornication, because through it, God's sons become the children of the devil." "He who adhereth to the Lord is one spirit

with him !” (1 Cor. 6 : 17.) “ Know you not that he who adhereth to a harlot is made one body (with her) ? (1 Cor. 6 : 16.) St. Bernard speaks still more clearly : “ If one eats the flesh of the swine, his flesh becomes changed into it, consequently if a man associates with impure spirits he must become an unclean spirit too.” O what a wretched condition ! when the human soul is subject to Satan, and becomes, as it were, another devil with him !

2. Consequently, it is no wonder “ that the sensual man perceiveth not the things that are of the Spirit of God,” (1 Cor. 2 : 14,) because he has entered into the servitude of the devil ; as it is written : “ Set then the sinner over him, and may the devil stand at his right hand.” (Ps. 108 : 6.) But are these fools more happy in the service of Satan than they formerly were in that of God ? Certainly not. “ Their worm dieth not,” says the Evangelist ; that is, the worm of conscience which gnaws them for sins committed, produces in them a hell upon earth. “ He seeketh rest,” says St. Matthew of the unclean spirit, “ and findeth none.” (Matt. 12 : 43.) He finds it not in God because he has offended him so grievously. Neither does he find it in himself, since a guilty conscience keeps his sins continually before his eyes. Self-love may cover all other sins with a mantle ; impurity alone cannot be disguised. It is too gross, too sensual, too abominable ; the licentious man cannot defend himself ; if he has a spark of religion left, he must condemn his evil courses. I shall not mention in how many ways an impure person may be tormented ; nor detail the species of martyrdom the profligate man or the abandoned woman endures in seeking to gratify the basest passions of corrupt nature. Jealousy rends apart the impure heart ;—burning rage consumes it : insatiable desire drives it up and down the world, seeking its vile pleasures, only to find in them disgust, loss of health, fortune, and reputation. Cruelty and bloodshed follow in its track ; and even after it has ended its miserable career in the almshouse, the public hospital, or the insane asylum, the curse of its foul disorder descends to its offspring, yea, even to the third and fourth generation. O the misery and torment the devil inflicts upon moral lepers here below ! They endure, indeed, an anticipated hell.

II. Sins of the flesh are a sure sign of *eternal damnation* ; for the conversion of an impure man is

1. *Seldom sincere* ; and
2. *Seldom lasting*.

1. Final impenitence is a sure sign of eternal reprobation ; and alas !

the impure are generally impenitent. Therefore Osee says of such: "They will not set their thoughts to return to God, for the spirit of fornication is in the midst of them, and they have not known the Lord." (Osee 5 : 4.) The prophet here indicates how difficult it is for the lustful to be converted to God, and how dreadful are the consequences of their impenitence. He does not say they will not become converted, but that they will not even think of becoming converted, and this because of the spirit of uncleanness, which possesses them. Is not this as clear as day, my brethren? The thoughts of the impure are not fixed upon God, but on some unchaste subject. "God seeing that the wickedness of men was great, and that all the thoughts of their hearts were bent on evil," (on impurity, for which reason the world was punished by the Deluge,) "he was touched with sorrow of heart, and he repented that he had made man." (Gen. 6 : 5.) Sensual people think neither of heaven nor of hell; enough for them, if they can gratify their corrupt passions. As Daniel says: "Lust has perverted thy heart, and turned thy eyes away from heaven, that thou mightest not see it and think of the just judgments to come." Nothing so hardens the heart or darkens the intellect, as this loathsome vice. No advice nor admonition is of any avail. "A man of sense will praise every word he shall hear and will apply it to himself; the luxurious man hath heard it, and it shall displease him, and he will cast it behind his back." (Ecclus. 21 : 18.) That is, he will despise it, and reject it with scorn. "Do you not see the foolish and unwise soul?" Thus St. Chrysostom speaks of the impure,— "They no longer comprehend what is spiritual; they heed no admonition; it is as though they no longer possessed the gift of reason."

2. But should it happen, that by chance, as it were, one of this unhappy class becomes converted,—O, how unstable is not his repentance! He falls and rises, he falls again to rise once more; he falls more frequently; finally, he doubts even his firm resolutions; he then concludes, a lasting conversion is impossible in his case; he despairs, and continues sinning as long as he can, and then he dies—Whither, alas! does he go? These are the miserable creatures of whom St Paul says, "They have in despair given themselves up to lasciviousness, and to the working of uncleanness." (Ephes. 4 : 19.) "I stick fast in the mire of the deep, and there is no sure standing," (Ps. 68 : 3); and out of this slough of corruption, I am unable to extricate myself. The lustful man has surrendered his soul to the devil for his lasting habitation and home. If, becoming weary of his repulsive guest, he endeavors once or twice to expel him forcibly, the unclean spirit says: "I will return into my house from whence I came out." (Matt. 12 : 44.) "And the last state of this man shall be worse than the first." God has

given him time for repentance, but he will not do penance. Finally God forsakes him, for the divine spirit of all holiness and purity cannot abide in an unclean soul, as he himself declares ; and the leprous sinner is given over, body and soul, to the custody of that demon whose spiritual nature despises, even while it prompts, the commission of sins of the flesh. The stench of such iniquities is fouler in his nostrils than all the reeking odors of Gehenna.

O, my beloved brethren ! if these arguments fail to touch the hearts of the impure, then they must be, indeed, slaves of the flesh, slaves of the devil, perhaps everlasting slaves of hell. But, no ! Let all among you hitherto bound by the chains of impurity, listen to the advice of the great royal Penitent, and "break these bonds asunder." (Ps. 2 : 3.) Sincere conversion is certainly difficult, but not impossible. "Go, show yourselves to the priests," as our Saviour directed the lepers to do in to-day's Gospel ; and confess your sins with heartfelt contrition. And you, O happy souls ! who, by the grace of God, have never yet become infected by this moral leprosy, humbly distrust yourselves, for all, and fly all uncleanness. "One can battle," says St. Anselm, "with other sins, but with this vice, we can only gain the victory by flight." "He who loves the danger shall perish in it." (Ecclus. 3 : 27.) Not only must the good Christian fly real dangers which menace his purity ; he must also avoid the remotest occasions of sin. The virtue of purity is very delicate. It is a flower that is easily blighted : a clear mirror that is tarnished by a breath. Therefore the prophet says, "Thou hast given a warning to them that fear thee, that they may flee from before the bow," (Ps. 59 : 6) not merely before the bow, but from the very sight of it. "A wise man feareth and declineth from evil, the fool leapeth over, and is confident." (Prov. 14 : 16.)

St. Augustine tells us that David saw a woman a thousand steps off, and fell into murder and adultery. Let this be a warning to us, my brethren, not to trust in our own strength, nor rely upon the assurance of a long career of tried virtue ; for flesh and blood can never expose itself wilfully and needlessly to danger, and hope to preserve purity, and bear off the palm of victory. Amen.

B.

## THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## THE DUTY OF GRATITUDE.

*"And one of them, when he saw that he was cleansed, went back, with a loud voice glorifying God. And he fell on his face before his feet, giving thanks : and this man was a Samaritan."* (Luke 17 : 15, 16.)

On his way to Jerusalem ten lepers, standing at a distance, cried out to our divine Lord: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." With his usual love and compassion he granted their request, sending them to the priests, in order that they might declare them clean. "And it came to pass that, as they went, they were cleansed." Strange to say, only one of these men felt impelled by gratitude to return and give thanks to their benefactor, and this one was a Samaritan. Jesus reproved the ingratitude of the other nine, saying: "Were not ten made clean? and where are the nine? There is no one found to return, and give glory to God, but this stranger!"

This is a striking picture of the conduct of the Jewish people. Their ancient hardness of heart, and their constant ingratitude, extending through a thousand years of love and tenderness on the part of God, are depicted in the nine ungrateful lepers, while the Samaritan, a stranger, reminds us of the grateful Gentiles, who gladly received, and highly prized, the benefits of redemption in Jesus Christ.

The ingratitude of these cleansed lepers is also a warning to us, not to imitate them in their sin, but to ever praise and thank God for all his benefits and graces. Ingratitude, however, is a most common vice of the human heart. Who is not obliged to strike his breast in shame and confusion, and to acknowledge his ingratitude to God? Who can truly say that he has received all his benefits with becoming thankfulness? That we may ever prove grateful to God for all the marvelous manifestations of his tender mercy and love in our regard, I will speak to-day

I. *Of the great duty of gratitude ; and*

II. *Of the manner in which we must discharge this duty.*

I. Do we owe gratitude to God for his blessings and benefits? Who could entertain a doubt to the contrary?

1. All the gifts and goods which God gives us are wholly undeserved proofs of his mercy ; hence he has a right to require that we should ac-



knowledge him as their Author, and praise him accordingly. Do we not expect gratitude from our fellow-man when we show him the most trifling proof of friendship? The ungrateful man is a monster—a living lie upon humanity. Gratitude to God, from whom we have all that we have, is, therefore, our first and holiest duty.

From this gratitude the gifts of God derive their highest value. Without it, the motives for his benevolence to his creatures are deprived of half their efficacy. What moves the Lord to bestow his benefits on man? It is to promote the latter's welfare and happiness. But is our advantage the only aim of the divine love? No, certainly; his own honor and glory are the chief end and aim of all God's works, and man, therefore, is bound to show gratitude, not only to avoid being a liar in the world, but also that, by referring all good to God, he may praise and honor him, and thus contribute to the glory of his Creator. Whoever is not grateful attacks the honor of the Lord God, and invalidates and disturbs the end and purpose of the divine bounty.

Gratitude is not only a holy and necessary duty, it is, also, a virtue which ennobles and distinguishes us as men. All creatures to which the Lord has given a spark of his grace and love render thanks to their Creator. No benefit which descends upon the earth is fruitless, but produces a new and higher life. The seed which the bosom of the earth receives springs up again, multiplied sixty and a hundred-fold. The rain which descends from the clouds, in order to moisten the earth, rises again to heaven. Every flower bears its seed in its blossom. The birds soar up into the air, in order to open their throats in grateful songs to their Maker, and the earth re-echoes back the joyful sound. "Unto the place from whence the rivers come, they return to flow again." (Ecclus. 1 : 7.) Nature is, in this manner, grateful to God, because of its laws, and, also, because the Lord has stamped upon it the law of thanksgiving as the rule of its life. Man, however, should do from free-will that which all nature does through obedience, and by a law of necessity. He to whom the Lord has given soul and speech should intelligently lay at the feet of his Creator his return of thanks. He who has received most from the hand of God should most loudly proclaim his praises, collecting together upon his tongue the various hymns of gratitude uttered by irrational creatures, in order to offer them all up understandingly to the Most High. Shall we, his chosen children, who have received such great things from his hands, refuse him the gratitude of our hearts?

Certainly, God has no need of our thanks. Our grandest and most heartfelt tribute of gratitude cannot increase his glory by one iota; and if the whole human race should forget to offer its act of thanksgiving to the Creator, he would still be infinitely rich in himself. But gratitude is the key which opens all the treasury of divine grace. God

will not permit his creatures to outdo him in generosity and liberality. No man has ever served his Maker faithfully without, at the same time, serving himself.

2. *God withdraws his graces and blessings from the ungrateful.* He that does not thankfully acknowledge a favor is unworthy of fresh ones. Such a man stops up the fountain from which he drinks ; he pulls down the props which support him. Every gift which we receive from God involves a holy responsibility ; and the Giver expects it to be applied to the object for which it is bestowed. He that permits a grace to lie unemployed in his soul will be deprived of the gift, and God will give to another who will put it to a better use. "But I say to you, that to every one that hath shall be given, and he shall abound ; and from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken from him." (Luke 19 : 26.) Ingratitude makes the Lord our enemy, and draws down his wrath upon us. "And now, O ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and ye men of Juda, judge between me and my vineyard," says the Lord by the mouth of his prophet. "What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard that I have not done to it? was it that I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it hath brought forth wild grapes? And now I will show you what I will do to my vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be wasted : I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will make it desolate : it shall not be pruned, and it shall not be digged : but briars and thorns shall come up, and I will command the clouds to rain no rain upon it." (Is. 5 : 3-6.)

The bitter fate of the chosen people of God, which the Prophet describes under the figure of a deserted and desolate vineyard, which brought forth nothing save wild grapes, will be the doom of every ungrateful soul. He that refuses to yield the Lord the fruits of thanksgiving, like the barren fig-tree, will be rooted up and cast into the fire. Misused graces will revenge themselves upon the ungrateful man in time and in eternity.

II. Gratitude being such a holy, reasonable, and necessary duty, the question arises, *In what manner can we best discharge it?* St. Thomas Aquinas gives us the answer to this question. He speaks of three kinds of gratitude :

1. *That a man should acknowledge the benefit received.*
2. *That he should give praise and thanks for it ; and*
3. *That, as far as is in his power, he should repay it.*

1. The Samaritan leper mentioned in our gospel practised this three-

fold gratitude. He acknowledged his cure to be a miracle wrought by Jesus. He returned to him as soon as he saw that he was healed, and praised God with a loud voice ; and, finally, he fell down at the feet of Jesus and thanked him.—If we truly desire to discharge our sacred duty of gratitude, we must acknowledge God as *the* Author and Source of all our blessings. Convinced of his Omnipotence and Love, and penetrated with the knowledge of our weakness and misery, and of the emptiness of all earthly things, the Christian recognizes the gracious hand of God in everything which he receives or enjoys. He does not ascribe these goods to his own strength, wisdom, or industry, nor to the forethought and love of others, nor even to the operations of the powers of nature. The health which he enjoys, his wealth, honor, and temporal success, all are heavenly blessings. Even in the painful circumstances of his life, in its darkest hours and vicissitudes, he recognizes and blesses the adorable will of God. Those misfortunes and sufferings which, by the divine permission, wound his heart, he accepts as coming from the hand of God equally with those proofs of love which rejoice his heart. Like Job, he esteems it his duty to praise the Lord in Christian patience in the midst of the severest trials and deprivations. When all things go well there is not much merit in gratitude, but when tempests arise, and one's ship is in danger of sinking, then gratitude is glorious.

Of nothing did God remind his people, in the Old Law, more frequently, than to remember the gracious hand that showered so many benefits upon them. When he led them out of the bondage of Egypt, or when he guided them through the desert, performing continual miracles in their behalf, the constant admonition of Moses was ever : "Remember what the Lord has done for you !" And afterwards, when God humbled their enemies, or when he assembled them after their captivity, the one word in the mouth of the Prophets was : "Remember the favours which the Lord has shown to you." This recognition of the hand of God in all the events of our lives, is the necessary consequence of a Christian contemplation of nature, in which we behold, not blind forces, without order or plan, as the heathens viewed it, but the omnipotent will of God, ruling and sweetly adjusting all.

2. But a truly grateful man thanks and praises the divine mercy and love by *the words of his mouth*. He will not be content to lock his gratitude up within the secret recesses of his heart ; the spirit of true thanksgiving will open his lips, and sound forth the praise of him who had been so good and gracious to him. With the Samaritan, he will hasten to the feet of Jesus in order to praise and thank him with a loud voice. This is an unfailing instinct of our very nature. No feeling or idea can fully animate or inspire us, if it find not expression in words. Joy or sorrow, fear or anguish, love or hatred, every pas-

sion that fills our hearts, moves our tongue—finds relief in speech. And the Lord has a right to this tribute of our lips. Our loud, full-throated *Laudate Dominum omnes gentes* must spread its praise abroad through the world, and invite all men to join us in praising and glorifying the holy name of God. Hence, Jesus looked with pleasure upon the Samaritan who returned him such heartfelt thanks; whilst he expressed his astonishment and displeasure at the ingratitude of the other nine.

Joy and gratitude, like murder, will out. Scarcely had the Blessed Virgin heard the message of the angel, and conceived the Holy One in her chaste womb, when she hastened over the mountains in order to announce to her cousin the coming of salvation to mankind. In the gratitude of her heart, she exclaimed: "My soul doth magnify the Lord; and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour; because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid; for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is his name." (Luke 1:46-49.) The three children in the fiery furnace called upon heaven and earth and all creatures to join them in praising and thanking God for delivering them from the devouring flames.

But what must I think of *your* interior gratitude, if the words, "Thanks be to God!" are never upon your tongues? Can I regard you as thankful servants of God, if you seat yourselves at table and partake of your food, without praising and blessing him who so lovingly feeds you? Can you truly proclaim your gratitude to God, if you begin your daily labor without morning prayer, or if you close your eyes at night, without having lifted up your souls to him in humble evening-worship? Are you really thankful to the Lord if you seldom or never appear before his altar, in order to praise him and his only-begotten Son? That gratitude which does not find expression in words is, in most cases, a very imperfect praise.

3. The most perfect gratitude consists *in repaying a benefit in words and in deed*. Our gratitude must correspond with the divine mercy and love in our regard. God is good and gracious to us, not merely in intentions and words, but his thoughts are great and glorious deeds, real gifts, which rejoice our hearts. Hence, the thanks of our hearts, if they would correspond to his goodness, must find expression in deeds and actions.

Here, too, the gratitude of the Samaritan is an example for us. He fell down before all the people, at the feet of Jesus, and adored him; and we may be sure that his whole after-life was spent in endeavoring to show his gratitude to the Lord. The action is the touchstone and completion of the intention. The proper application and

good use of a gift is the grandest act of thanksgiving we can offer to God therefor. He who is truly grateful, will ever strive to please his divine Master by a pious Christian life, by keeping all his commandments. He will apply all his gifts to God's honor, to his own salvation, and the good of his neighbors ; and he will take great care not to offend his Benefactor by sin.

But how do we generally apply the gifts and benefits of God ? He has, perhaps, granted you riches and earthly goods ; but they either lie useless in your hands, or you apply them to selfish, unworthy, or even sinful ends. Is this true gratitude ? The Lord grants you health and strength of body, but they are to you only an occasion and means of dissipation and sin. What do we say of a man who casts a benefit in the face of its giver—who openly insults him with his own gifts ? What can we say of the gratitude of that Christian who (as, alas ! so often happens !) uses God's gifts as a means of committing more grievous sins against him ? That is ingratitude of the blackest and most shameful kind !

Let us always show our gratitude to God in a pious and worthy manner. Let every one of his gifts be to us an incentive to his greater love and more faithful service. In all temptations to sin, or of abuse of the divine gifts and graces, let us exclaim with the Patriarch Joseph : “ Behold, my master has delivered all these things to me. . . . How, then, am I to do this wicked thing, and sin against my God ? ” (Gen. 39 : 8, 9.) And let us daily repeat to ourselves the beautiful opening words of the *Preface* of the Mass : “ It is truly meet and just, right and available to salvation, that we should always and in all places give thanks to God.” Yes, always, and in all places, and for all things, let us praise and thank the Lord. Amen.

BISHOP EHRLER.



## FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## THE VALUE OF AN IMMORTAL SOUL.

*"Is not the life more than the food?"* (Matth. 6 : 25.)

Our Saviour led his disciples step by step up the path of perfection. First, he simply taught them to avoid evil ; but to-day, he teaches them to do good. Up to this time they went the way of purification ; now they have entered upon the way of illumination. He takes them up into a mountain : so that from that elevation, they may look down upon, and comprehend more clearly, the vanity of the world, and the nothingness of temporal goods. They were yet too much occupied with gaining a livelihood, and making provision for the future. These worldly solicitudes are great obstacles in the way of perfection. In order to impress upon them the necessity of seeking first the kingdom of God, he asks them : *"Is not the life more than the food?"* A very important question ! To-day, I will endeavor to answer it ; and to show you

I. *That you have a precious soul ; and*

II. *That you have only one soul.*

I. The value of the soul may be recognized,

1. *From its nature, and*

2. *From the price which Christ has paid for it.*

1. "God created man to his own image, to the image of God he created him." (Gen. 1 : 27.) The repetition of a phrase in the Sacred Scripture always indicates something important. Learn, then, Christians, the wonderful and inestimable dignity of your origin. You do not bear marks of the Creator's hand, in common with all other creatures, but you are made in his image. "As God pervades the whole universe, and is in every creature," says St. Augustine, "so also, is the soul in every part of the body, as in a world." St. Gregory of Nyssa says : "We cannot name any particular place in which God dwells ; but we know that he exists. Thus, also, we do not know in what part of the body the soul dwells ; but we know that it pervades the whole body, and affects it all." "The Holy Trinity," says St. Bernard, "has created a trinity in the human soul to his own likeness, in giving to it the three powers of will, memory, and understanding."

God is a pure spirit, so also is the soul ; he is immortal, as is also the soul. He is good, just, merciful ; all these, and other virtues, the soul may acquire, although not in the same degree.

2. No one knew better the value of the human soul than did our Saviour, the incarnate God. And, when it was lost, at how dear a price did he redeem it ! “ You are bought with a great price,” says the Apostle. (1 Cor. 6 : 20.) “ So dear is the salvation of a single soul, that on account of it, God became man, and suffered so much,” says St. Chrysostom. Our soul is so precious that our Redeemer gave his own life in exchange for it ; for he was that Good Shepherd who “ giveth his life for his sheep.” (John 10 : 14.) St. Paul understood well this love of God when he wrote : “ I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered himself for me.” (Gal. 2 : 20.) “ He hath delivered his soul unto death, and was reputed with the wicked : and he hath borne the sins of many.” (Isaia 53 : 12.) Yes, he died for each one of us individually, as well as for all men in general.

II. The value of the soul is the greater, because each man has

1. *Only one soul*; and
2. *Its loss is irreparable.*

1. When anything is precious, its rarity adds to its worth. For example, the diamond is precious in itself, but suppose that there was only one diamond in the world, who would be able to estimate its value ? Dearly beloved ! We have already perceived how precious is the human soul ; but its value is immeasurably increased when we consider that each one of us has *only one* soul. We have two feet, two hands, two eyes, two ears, but only a single soul. If a man has thousands of dollars, he may, at his pleasure, risk a hundred on the chances of a game ; but, if a man has only a single dollar with which to procure the necessities of life, how carefully will he not seek to preserve it ? What folly, then, to be so reckless, so careless, of our one precious soul, to thrust it so blindly into danger of every sort, as though we had a hundred souls instead of only one ! Our Saviour prized our souls much higher than we do. He left the ninety-nine sheep in the desert, in order to go in search of the one that was lost. He understood far better than we what the loss of a soul is. St. Thomas, alone, among the Apostles doubted the resurrection of Christ, yet for the sake of that one sceptical soul, our Saviour appeared a second time in the midst of his disciples, showed Thomas his wounds, and delivered him, thus, from doubts which would have caused his eternal ruin. Our Heavenly Father rejoices more over the one sheep that was lost and is found, than over

the ninety-nine sheep that have never gone astray. "It is not the will of your Father, who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." (Matth. 18 : 14.)

2. Beloved Christians ! "It is appointed for men once to die," (Hebr. 9 : 27,) but take notice : "*once*," *only once*. If a man dies unhappily, his dreadful fate is sealed for all eternity : for "If the tree fall to the south, or to the north, in what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be." (Ecclus. 11 : 3.) We are well convinced of this truth ; no further proofs are needed, but simply more reflection and practical resolutions. We have only *one heart* which sends its vital currents through our veins. We have only *one life*, and oh, how assiduous are we not to preserve it ! If a grave disorder attacks the heart, if danger of death threaten this uncertain life of ours, we make every effort to save it. We call in the physician, we take every prescribed remedy, no matter how bitter or disgusting ; we submit to fire, caustic, the knife, and even exile from home and friends in a distant but more favorable climate. And how is it, my dear Christians, with your one precious immortal soul ? If you lose that one, all is lost, and lost for all eternity ! What madness ! We do not die three, or four times, so that we may learn, by experience and practice, the art of dying well. We can lose our immortal soul but once, and losing it once, its loss is irreparable and everlasting. What excuse can we offer for our insanity in this matter ?

Once more I ask you, "Is not the life more than the food ?" Awake, at last, O man ! and learn the value of your soul ! "No price is worthy of a soul. (Ecclus. 26 : 20.) "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? Or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?" (Matth. 16 : 26.) Of what use to expend so much care and solicitude upon the perishable body, and bestow so little thought upon the undying soul ? What can you gain by carefully adorning the body, which must soon be the food of worms ? Why do you pamper your sinful flesh ? Do you not know that the more you flatter it, the more unbearable it becomes ? Oh ! reflect seriously upon your eternal salvation, and take to heart the difference which exists between the corruptible body and the immortal soul. Reflect frequently that you have but one soul, and that it is an inexpressibly precious soul. "If you have lost a sum of money," says St. Chrysostom, "you may get another sum in its stead ; the same is true of the loss of other property, as well as of friends. But if you lose your soul, you cannot get another in its stead, even if you owned the whole world. If you were the greatest sovereign, and had all the nations of the earth under your dominion, and if all the treasures of the universe belonged to you ; yet, with all this, you could not purchase an individual soul." Amen.

B.

## FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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 THE CHRISTIAN LAW IS IMMUTABLE.

*"No man can serve two masters." (Matth. 6 : 24.)*

By nature, it is very difficult, nay, almost impossible, for man to be the enemy of God, and to refuse him obedience. To turn away from the eternal Truth and Love in open rebellion, and with open eyes and a conscious determination of the will, is an unnatural disposition of mind ; and, no doubt, there are but very few persons who have fallen to such a depth of impiety.

But there is another condition which is not much better than an open separation from God, to which the Gospel of this day alludes; I mean that state of hesitation between good and evil, that state of wavering and indecision as to whether we shall espouse the cause of God, or the cause of Belial. Many Christians are neither very bad, nor very good ; they do not go so far as to entirely abandon their faith and neglect every Christian duty, but they lack the courage and fortitude to be practical Catholics. They are neither hot nor cold. They desire to please every one and to displease none. They resemble vanes turning with every wind. It is this want of firmness, this continual hesitation between good and evil, which is most strongly condemned by our Lord in these words : "No man can serve two masters, for he will either hate the one, and love the other, or he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon. Seek ye, therefore, the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." God is not satisfied with a divided heart ; to serve him slothfully, is not to serve him at all. The will of God is not done by halves. "The Lord's name is Jealous ; he is a jealous God." (Exod. 14 : 14.) A love that makes no sacrifice for its beloved, is no love at all. A love that bargains is an abomination to God. This state of indecision, in a short time, gives place to formal rebellion against God, and draws man in the end, to certain perdition.

Nor is this to be deplored in individuals alone ; in our modern world at large we also witness this fatal wavering between good and evil. The great masses of men are, at present, opposed to the Church and to the principles of Christianity. Their thoughts and ideas are in diametrical and irreconcilable contradiction to the requirements of the Christian law. Human progress and modern civilization, they say, can no longer be fettered by the rigid dogmas of former days.

Science has rendered religion and the belief in Christ altogether unnecessary and superfluous. Universal education is the panacea for all ills. Culture replaces the influence of religion upon the masses of the people. They say the Church in deference to the modern progress of civilization must alter her inflexible dogmas, mitigate the rigor of her moral laws, and accommodate herself to the spirit of the times. No one can deny that there is a great contradiction between the spirit of the Church and the spirit of the world. The only question is : Is any reconciliation possible between the Church and the world ? Can religion yield to the claims of the world ? Can the Church deviate or depart from the maxims of the Gospel because of the corruption of the world ? By no means ; " no man can serve God and Mammon."

Let us consider these questions, to-day, that we may not hesitate between good and evil, that we may not be tossed to and fro, but remain steadfast on the side of God. The spirit of Christianity and the spirit of the world are irreconcilable, and there can be no agreement between them, because the Christian law is as immutable as Christ its Author. In other words :

- I. *Christianity is the same to-day, as of old;*
- II. *Human nature is the same to-day, as of old, and*
- III. *The spirit of the times is the same as that of old.*

I. Human laws are subject to constant mutations. There is nothing lasting under the sun. Everything is imperfect ; a continual change is going on within, without, and around us. Times change and we change with them. No human law will suit or satisfy all times, places, and circumstances.

Is this the case also with Christianity ? Is the Gospel of Christ subject to any change or alteration ? Even if God had never spoken the powerful words : " Heaven and earth shall pass away : but my words shall not pass away " ( Luke 21 : 33 ), the nature and the essence of the Gospel should convince us that it admits of no change.

1. For what is the Gospel, and the Christian law deduced from it, but the *emanation and revelation of the essence of God* ? " And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us : and we saw his glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." ( John 1 : 14. ) The Son of God left his throne in heaven, came down upon earth to teach us the truth. He gave us a revelation, disclosing to us the divine essence and making known to us our duties. We call the Son of God, the splendor of the Father, and the figure of his substance, and the Gospel which he preached is also the splendor of the



Father, and the figure of his substance. It is the same Word of the Father, as it proceeded from his bosom in Jesus Christ, and was multiplied in the individual truths and maxims of the Gospel. Hence the substance of God being eternally unchangeable, Christ and his Gospel are eternally unchangeable. "I am the Lord, and change not," (Malach. 3 : 6.) "With whom there is no change or shadow of vicissitude." (James 1 : 17,) "Jesus Christ yesterday and to-day : and the same for ever." (Hebr. 13 : 8.) Everything proceeding from, and connected with, the substance of God is absolutely and infinitely unchangeable. Human thoughts are mutable, unstable, but divine thoughts are not. In earthly things, inventions and discoveries can be made, making former principles doubtful or untrue. In divine things all progress is excluded.

2. What is the Gospel and the Christian law deduced from it, but an emanation and revelation of *the wisdom of God*? In his inscrutable wisdom, he made his revelation for all times : "Thou hast made all things in wisdom ; the earth is filled with thy riches." (Ps. 103 : 5.) "Great is our Lord, and great is his power : and of his wisdom there is no number." (Ps. 106 : 5.) No time could ever convince this wisdom of untruth, no events could ever confound it. Human intellect may deceive and be defective, and varying circumstances may compel it to change its opinions. There may be need for something better or higher. But the wisdom of God can vouchsafe no better revelation ; there can be nothing newer and more perfect. Jesus Christ yesterday, to-day, and the same for ever.

3. What is the Gospel and the Christian law deduced from it? It is not merely the emanation and revelation of God's substance and wisdom, which are decried as incompatible with human progress, but the Faith and code of morals—in short, *the practical application of our holy Faith to our lives*. Not one of the natural conclusions drawn from the truths of revelation for the sanctification of our souls, can become useless or superfluous in the course of time, and hence no precept of the Church can ever be repealed. They may, according to the character and needs of the times, take divers shapes or forms. The Church may mitigate the austerity of the precept of fasting, or, according to the requirements of the climate, dispense from the general law, but the precept of fasting must always remain active in her to the end. Thus, also, the penitential discipline can be changed, but the necessity of the precept of penance shall last for ever. In many outward things, in ecclesiastical customs, ceremonies, and discipline, you may speak of changes, abrogations, and alterations, but the substance and essence, the fundamentals of the Church in matters of faith and morals,

are always the same and never change. No article can be taken out of the wonderful structure of faith without making it totter and fall, no precept can lose its obligations, without injury to the Christian life.

When people say that Christianity should reconcile itself with and accommodate itself to the spirit of our time, and that the Church must depart from her ancient severity, they know not of what they speak. For I ask : Which are the truths of faith, or precepts of morality, that have lost their value ? Is it no longer true that one God in three divine Persons governs and preserves heaven and earth and must be honored and adored by all his creatures ? Is it no longer true that the only begotten Son of God has redeemed us from sin and hell by his death on the cross ? Is it no longer true that, eighteen hundred years ago, he established the one true Church, in which he deposited his grace and truth for the salvation of the world ? Is it no longer true that he instituted seven Sacraments ? That we must be baptized and confess our sins, if we would obtain the remission thereof ? Is it no longer true that Jesus Christ instituted the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and that he is truly, really, and substantially present under the appearances of bread and wine ? Is it no longer true that he gave to his Church a visible head in the person of St. Peter and of his successors ? Or, can any of the commandments of God be repealed ? Which of them have been abolished ? Perhaps these : Honor thy father and thy mother,—Thou shalt not kill,—Thou shalt not steal.—Thou shalt not commit adultery—Thou shalt not bear false witness ? Have theft, murder, adultery, and perjury ceased to be grievous sins ? Has right become wrong, and wrong right ? Or have men become like gods ready to push the Father in heaven from his throne, and overthrow the work of Christ and of his Church ?

II. As the Christian law will have force for all times, because in its substance or essence it is above all change and progress, so human nature, for which the Gospel was preached by Christ, shall ever remain the same.

i. People talk a great deal of changes in the world, the progress in art and science, and the vicissitudes to which individuals, as well as nations, are subject. It is, indeed, like viewing a grand panorama, to consider the human race from the days when the tribes and people from Babel scattered all over the globe up to the present day. Nations rise and fall, people come and go like the waves of the sea. But, great and wonderful as have been time's changes and vicissitudes, one thing has never changed, one thing has always remained the same, viz., *the human soul*, and with it, *our whole human nature* in its essence,

dispositions, and necessities, in its aims and destiny. At all times, and in all places, men have come forth from their mother's womb, lived for a longer or a shorter period upon the earth and then—died. They have all laughed and wept, loved and hated, married and given in marriage; they ate and drank, sinned and did penance, prayed and cursed. Whether they lived in huts or palaces, in cities or in deserts, they all looked up to heaven, and asked themselves: "Why are we placed in this world? What is our destiny?" Though the answers may have differed one from the other, according to the degree of their civilization and education or the state of their corrupt hearts, the longing desire to receive a solution of the problem, was one and the same in all. The stars of heaven sparkle and run their course as friendly and unchanged as in the beginning, thousands of years ago. The earth is the same, it has lost neither its form nor its fertility. Neither has any law upon which God has built the world, lost its value or vital force. Of them, may be said: "Thou hast set a bound which they shall not pass over: neither shall they return to cover the earth." (Ps. 103: 9.) As the visible creation has always remained the same, so man with regard to his natural life, dispositions, and wants, as well as his spiritual life, his aims, and destiny. The laws of God, which govern the world, can be affected or altered by no phase of human change or progress.

2. Why should the Gospel at any period lose its force and vitality? *The greatest human progress, possible within the limits set by God, cannot alter the necessity for the truths and graces of Christianity.* The child of the Asiatic and African needs instruction in the Christian truths of salvation, if it would live happily and die holily, as much as the highly-accomplished scion of an educated American or European family. Both children must be baptized in order to be freed from original sin, and to enter into life. He that has sinned needs the grace of God, no matter whether the sin has been committed in silk and satin, or in the blouse of the artisan or common laborer. Will human progress ever make the Sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist unnecessary, superfluous? I think it is immaterial to an immortal soul as to whether its possessor dies by a simple, natural death, or falls a prey to a cannon-ball, a boiler explosion or a railroad collision.

3. Why should the Christian law suffer a change in our days? Is it because we live in more beautiful and comfortable houses, or are arrayed in better and more expensive clothing? Is it because we know how to express our thoughts more elegantly, and are more polite in our conduct? Or because the application of steam and electricity have increased our facilities for travel, commerce, and more wide-spread com-

munication with the nations? Say, rather is it not because men have become more and more corrupt? The changed life of the world, all the so-called progress of the nations, indeed, exercise an influence upon the spiritual life of man, but the disposition, wants, and end of our being nevertheless remain immutable.

4. When people say that strict requirements of the Gospel can no longer be fulfilled in our days, as they were in the former ages of the Church, I am again at a loss to understand such logic. Look back upon the first Christian centuries, in which the world took in the seed of Christianity with fresh power, and fulfilled the commandments with youthful vigor, or contemplate those other periods in which Christian and religious interests were esteemed the highest and holiest of the world—were the men of those days other and higher beings than ourselves? Had they another flesh, or did other and less human hearts beat within their bosoms? Had they a more perfect will; or had they stronger graces than ours? No. They were by nature the same lukewarm and sinful beings as we are. Their flesh was under the same law of evil as ours. Their hearts were equally as timid and inconstant—their will equally as weak and powerless. And no other graces were given them than those fruits of the Holy Cross, which every year and at all times hang on the tree of salvation for the nourishment of our souls. In painful struggle and bloody combat, in indefatigable fervor and pious solicitude, they ascended the mountain of holiness. Just listen to what St. Paul says of his life. He speaks of the sting of flesh which tormented him, of the body of death under whose weight he groaned. But he also says: “I chastise my body and bring it into subjection.” (1 Cor. 9 : 27.)

“The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence,” saith our Lord Jesus Christ: “and the violent bear it away.” (Matth. 11 : 12.) “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” (Matth. 16 : 24.) No time, and no desire can take away or change these words in their forcible weight and meaning. Upon this foundation is the kingdom of God built for all times and for all men.

III. But if *we go to the bottom of all this talk about the Gospel losing its vitality and value on account of the changed condition of life, and especially on account of the corruption of the times—we shall see still more clearly its utter untruthfulness.* Not only has the Christian law remained the same as formerly, not only is human nature for whom it is destined the same, but the times also are to-day the same as they formerly were.

I. “What is it that hath been? The same thing that shall be. What

is it that hath been done? The same that shall be done. Nothing under the sun is new : neither is any man able to say Behold this is new : for it hath already gone before us." (Ecclus. 9 : 10.) It is men that make history, or the times with their aspirations, their virtues and vices : and as human nature shall ever reveal itself in the same manner, so the times shall ever bear the same features.

2. It may be that, in our days, the contrast between belief and unbelief appears sharper and more defined, it may be that, in some countries, godlessness raises its head bolder and more impudently, and shows more clearly its terrible features ; that good, in the combat with evil, more frequently succumbs to its fierce adversary, but name me a time in which we do not behold the same dread spectacle. When was there a time in which it was easier to practise virtue than vice? When a time in which infidelity fought not against faith with hellish rage and persistency?

3. True, there were times wherein the corruption of the world was greater and more wide-spread, in which human malice manifested itself more terribly. But without contrasting the different ages of the world, I need only call to your mind the words of our Saviour, who has told us that every period of time must be a time of struggle for his followers : "I came not to send peace but the sword." (Matt. 6 : 34.) He puts his sword into the hand of each man, no matter at what time he may live. With it, we must fight and conquer the devil, the enemy of our salvation, who "as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour." (1 Pet. 5 : 8.) There shall never be a time in which the old serpent will not employ his artifices and stratagems for the ruin of man. "From the days of John the Baptist, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." (Matt. 11 : 12.) From the moment wherein the Angels sinned, the creatures of God have been divided into two camps waging war against each other in a violent irreconcilable battle, which will last to the end of time. The wheat and cockle grow together, and in some places the cockle grows ranker than in others, hindering the growth of the good seed, but not till the end of the world will the cockle be rooted up. Though the way and means may differ wherein hell manifests itself or the devil attacks souls—though the struggle is carried on now in this, then in that form, the life of man upon earth will, and must, be a continued warfare. There may be truces, this side the grave, but there will never be a lasting peace. It is therefore foolish and unjust for men to lay the blame upon the perversity of the times, and fear to battle for the kingdom of God. The devil and his associates know at all times what they want, and they act according to their knowledge. And the more



virtue exerts itself at any time, the more violently they carry on the warfare. And shall we fear the combat when it is most necessary? Shall we like cowards entrench ourselves behind those circumstances of the time, which should only serve to rouse us to a more vigorous and persistent resistance?

4. "I say still more, *not only has this life been always a time of warfare, but from the beginning of the world, since the period when the master of the family went out at various times to hire laborers into his vineyard, the good servants and friends of God have always been in the minority, his enemies and adversaries in the majority.* At all times the words of our Lord were fulfilled: "Many are called, but few chosen." (Matth. 20 : 16.) "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction; and many there are who enter by it. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way, which leadeth to life; and few there are who find it." (Matth. 7 : 13 : 14). Even in the days when the Deluge destroyed the sinful generation from the face of the earth, the Sacred Scripture says: "The wickedness of men was great on the earth, and all the thought of their heart was bent upon evil at all times." (Gen. 6 : 5.) Only one family was just, and found grace with God. Did he not say in later times: "Go forth out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and out of thy father's house, and come into the land which I will show thee." (Gen. 12 : 1.) Not ten just were found when he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrha. Consider again those times in which the Saviour appeared upon earth in the form of man. The majority of his people had turned from him in their unbelief and impenitence. Did not our Church wax great and strong in her warfare with, and contradiction of the whole world? "Fear not, little flock, for it hath pleased your Father to give you a kingdom." (Luke 12 : 32.) We find no period of history in which numerous enemies, either within or without, did not arise against her. Our times therefore are no worse, are no more corrupt, than former ages. When I consider the complaints of men about our evil times, I am always reminded of those words of St. Augustine: "Let us live well, and the times will be good. Times shall be better when we shall be better."

5. Our Saviour even foretold *that times of tribulations would come upon his elect*, so that they themselves would be in danger of being drawn into the torrent of corruption: "They shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall put you to death: and you shall be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be scandalized, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall arise and seduce many. And because iniquity hath abounded, the charity of many shall grow cold." (Matth.

24 : 9-13.) But does the Lord say that when these things come to pass, he would no longer insist upon the duties and requirements of the Gospel? By no means ; on the contrary, he exhorts his disciples to perseverance, to a firm, immovable faith : " He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved." (Matth. 24 : 13.) " Then, if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not." (Matth. 24 : 23.)

6. Let the waves of infidelity and corruption of morals rise ever so high, we have no reason to despond or to be of little faith. We may say with the prophet : " I will leave me seven thousand men in Israel, whose knees have not bowed before Baal, and every mouth that hath not worshipped him, kissing his hand." (3 Kings 19 : 18.) There are yet millions and millions of faithful and loyal Catholics. There are yet thousands of pious bishops and priests whose sacrifice is acceptable to God. There are myriads of every state, sex and age, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, who serve God in truth and in justice, and keep his commandments. It avails nothing to be discouraged and cowardly, to uselessly lament the corruption of the times. " No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other ; or he will hold to the one, and despise the other." It is a delusion and a lie to assert that Christianity, such as our holy Catholic Church teaches it, is incompatible with the changed life of the world in our own days. Even our time with all its science, art, industry, commerce, and material prosperity can be Christian, and will remain Christian. Be not therefore deceived by the foolish and senseless talk of the multitude. To the Church belongs the future, though the world should madly contest the prize ! And if this finite future should not be ours, eternity at least will belong to us, the certain and imperishable future ! Let us strive then to keep the commandments, and to dedicate our lives to the one God of all times, who will bestow upon us, in our time, the precious treasure of life everlasting.

BISHOP EHRLER.

## FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## THE FEAR OF GOD.

*"And there came a great fear on them all: and they glorified God."*  
(Luke 7 : 16.)

In the Gospel of to-day, we behold our divine Lord raising a dead man to life. Thus he confirms his teaching by miracles—those impressive sermons whose arguments consisted of deeds as well as of words. The ears of the hearers drank in his doctrines, and the eyes saw that his teaching came from God; for no one else could perform such signs and wonders. These marvels were wrought by Christ, as St. Augustine says, "not for the sake of the miracles, but that, as the eye beheld the signs, so reason should comprehend the mysteries hidden therein." Hence the miracles produced different effects upon the minds of the spectators. For instance, the raising of the dead to life, related in to-day's Gospel, awoke a great fear in the people, as the Evangelist relates. This fear of the Lord is most useful to all Christians, because it excites in them

I. *A hatred of sin*; and

II. *A love of virtues.*

These two important conditions, I wish to place clearly before you. "Come, children, hearken to me : I will teach you the fear of the Lord." (Ps. 33 : 12.)

I. The fear of God excites in us a hatred of anything that might offend him, and leads us

1. *To repent of past sins*, and

2. *To avoid future sins.*

1. "The fear of the Lord driveth out sin." (Ecclus. 1 : 27.). St. Ambrose, commenting on this, explains that "Fear always precedes repentance." Where there is no fear, there is also no improvement; and the conscience can scarcely be purified from sin, unless it has been first shaken by fear. Many are converted by the love, but still more by the fear, of God.

2. This fear is not only the beginning of the conversion, but, also, its progress. By it our conscience is purified from sin, while it helps

us to acquire many virtues. He who fears God, exerts himself to avoid even the shadow of sin, and to enter upon the path of perfection. "God is come to prove you, and that the dread of him might be in you, and you should not sin." (Exod. 20 : 20.) He that truly fears God, guards himself against all that might displease him. "By the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil." (Prov. 16 : 6.) The royal prophet proclaims this truth very plainly ; for as soon as he declares, "I am afraid of thy judgments," he adds : "I have done judgment and justice." (Ps. 118 : 121.)

## II. The fear of God animates us

1. *To walk in the rough paths of virtue, and*
2. *To persevere courageously therein.*

1. "He that feareth God, will do good." (Ecclus. 15 : 1.) Without this gift, which is the first grace, and the beginning of all religion, nothing good can be effected. "The fear of the Lord is like a paradise of blessings." (Ecclus. 40 : 28.) "They that fear the Lord, will prepare their hearts, and in his sight will sanctify their souls." (Ecclus. 2 : 20.) "They that fear the Lord, will seek after the things that are well pleasing to him : and they that love him, shall be filled with his law." (Ecclus. 2 : 19.) For, when one reflects who it is that he must fear,—the all-powerful, the all-wise, the all-seeing God—this fear will be a good teacher of piety. Many would be enamoured of transitory vanities, if the fear of future punishment did not turn them aside from those dangerous objects. On this account, the fear of God casts out the love of all temporal and earthly things, which might be an occasion or temptation to sin.

2. When a man has once overcome the first difficulties in the path of perfection, he walks courageously forward in it. St. Bridget once declared that if we bear with patience the first pricks of the thorns that beset our feet, they will soon turn to roses. And St. Lawrence Justinian describes the journey of these brave pilgrims to eternity, saying : "O, what good desires and resolutions do they entertain, what holy thoughts, what pious aspirations ! From these arise the most commendable works of virtue, which produce those fruits of which the Apostle speaks when he says that the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, and so on." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ;" (Ecclus. 1 : 16) as it is, also, the end, or the goal of love. This filial fear and sanctifying charity are like twin sisters, who are scarcely ever seen apart. "The perfection of virtue consists in this," says St. Jerome, "that we love God with a holy fear, or, which is the same thing, that we reverence him with a

sincere love." Thus fear is transformed into love; "Perfect charity casteth out fear." (1 John 4 : 18.)

"Work your salvation with fear and trembling." (Philipp. 2 : 12.) Each one should be *afraid of himself*, if he fears nothing else, says St. Augustine. He who hopes to secure a blissful eternity should learn to be careful and timorous for a short time. But when death approaches, ah! then, my dear Christians, we may begin, at last, to lose a little of our holy fear; for the nearer we come to our everlasting country, the less we have to dread. A wanderer, who is far removed from his fatherland, has great cause for fear; yet this holy fear produces no sadness of spirit, but rather a true joy, real content, solid satisfaction. "O Lord, what great sweetness hast thou prepared for them that fear thee!" Divine Fear, that precious gift of the Holy Ghost, arises not from objects of either present or future time, but from a contempt for all temporal goods and a firm hope of eternal felicity. "In heaven, it is true, our joy will be unmixed with fear," says St. Augustine, "but now it is mingled with fear, because we do not yet enjoy perfect security."

Therefore, let us fear now, so that in eternity, and at the Last Judgment, we may have nothing to fear, but may repose in confidence on the bosom of divine Love, hearing from the lips of Christ those tender words wherewith he once allayed the fright of his timid disciples: "Fear not: it is I," I, your God, your merciful Redeemer, your everlasting Reward! Amen.

B.



## FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## VIRTUE ITS OWN REWARD.

*"When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said to her : Weep not." (Luke 7 : 13.)*

Sad, indeed, above measure was the condition of the widow of Naim. One of the heaviest calamities had befallen her. Death, which had already deprived her of her husband, had now taken from her her only son, the support of her old age, while yet in the full vigor of youth. Overwhelmed with grief, she follows the coffin in which lies her lost treasure. For her, there is no more happiness on earth. No hope can cheer her heart, no consolation assuage its bitter sorrow. But suddenly, there appears upon the scene ONE who has power to alleviate such woe as this, whose power extends beyond the grave, and whom death itself must obey. As the funeral train passes forth from the city-gates, it is met by Jesus; he can not pass by the lonely mourner, or behold such sorrow without granting relief. To use the simple and affecting language of the Gospel : "When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and he said to her : Weep not. And he came near and touched the bier. And he said : Young man, I say to thee, arise. And he that was dead sat up, and he delivered him to his mother."

This touching narrative of the Gospel should convince us that belief in Jesus Christ is the sole relief in all sorrows—the source and foundation of all true and permanent happiness. The human heart continually sighs and thirsts for happiness. From the cradle to the grave, all our desires and efforts are centered in that one word—*happiness*. The golden dreams of youth, the ardent labors and exertions of manhood, and the still, quiet longing of old age are the cries of our heart for happiness. We have a right to happiness; God has created us for it, and for this reason, man does not suffer himself to be stopped in the pursuit of it, though he may be deceived and disappointed by its false shadows.

Reason and revelation teach us, that *perfect happiness is not attainable here upon earth*. Undisturbed permanent happiness is not the lot of mortals. The tree may be planted, and cultivated here upon earth, but its fruit must be gathered and enjoyed hereafter in heaven. It ripens only in the sun of eternity, in the unfading light of Paradise, where the hunger and thirst of the heart shall be satisfied above measure. Nevertheless, a certain amount of happiness exists even here and

may be found by all who truly seek it. Though sin and sorrow assert their dark sway, and all earth's joys and pleasures are stamped with the seal of death, within the holy sanctuary of Religion, faith, hope, and divine love enlighten the spirit, and a celestial peace cheers and strengthens the heart of man. Those only are truly happy who cherish religion and fulfill its sacred duties ; for,

- I. *They enjoy peace of heart;*
- II. *They walk under the special protection of God;*
- III. *They have the sure hope of eternal life.*

I. Happiness is not to be found in the things of this world. All earthly things are vain and perishable ; and man has been created for God and for the eternal joys of heaven. Neither worldly riches and honors, nor the delight of sensual pleasure can free man from sorrow or disappointment. Disgust and shame, destruction and death, are the fatal dregs of that poisoned chalice. Happiness, so far as it can be our portion in this world, must come from within, and dwell in the soul independently of all these accidental external goods. It must be founded upon God, the only source of happiness, the foundation whence all joys proceed and, apart from whom, all is supreme misery.

1. "Come to me, all you that labor, and are heavy laden," says our blessed Lord, "and I will refresh you. Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest for your souls." (Matth. 11 : 28, 29.) Ye children of men, (he cries out to us in these words), ye who sigh for rest for your souls, come to me, I shall make known to you the origin of happiness upon earth. Take up my yoke upon you ; learn of me to be meek and humble of heart ; and streams of peace, such as the world can neither give nor take away, shall replenish your souls, and the sun of the purest and highest earthly happiness shall shine upon you ! "

2. This happiness is the portion of the virtuous. It is the recompense of a life spent in the practice of virtue. Free from all guilt and remorse of conscience, the just man looks up with a hopeful glance to his Lord and God. There is no dark barrier of sin between his soul and him who is its life, and light, and joy. If the remembrance of past offences arises in his heart, a loving sorrow and assured hope of pardon quickly remove all painful fears. Joyfully and courageously he faces the future, and endeavors by penance to repair past errors and mistakes. The sufferings of life cannot oppress the spirits of the virtuous nor make them unhappy. They are not exempt from the universal curse of mankind ; they have to suffer, to overcome, and to bear

the cross. Accidents, calamities, temporal losses, tribulations, sickness, and death are their portion as well as that of the wicked,—in fact, a greater measure of earthly tribulation falls to the lot of the just than to that of the sinners. But nothing is able to disturb their interior peace.

Consider those great and noble souls which the Sacred Scripture presents to us as perfect models for our imitation ! Reflect upon the overwhelming afflictions of that patient sufferer Job. His dwelling is destroyed, his fields are devastated, his cattle stolen, his children killed, a disgusting distemper has seized him, and his friends mock him. Yet he is calm and patient. No word of complaint escapes him. His patience has become proverbial. How does it happen that the peace of his soul remains undisturbed in the midst of these bitter afflictions ? He is conscious of being a child of God, of possessing his love and friendship, and as no earthly and infernal power can rob him of this treasure, this supreme bliss, he is content. He knows that his Redeemer lives, and therefore he does not mourn the loss of earthly goods or shrink from the scorn of men or the fury of demons. Behold in St. Paul another illustrious example ! He is in chains awaiting the sentence of death, but with his fettered hand he writes : “ I am filled with comfort ; I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation.” (2 Cor. 7 : 4.) Whence this joy of heart ? He gives us the answer : “ Our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience.” (2 Cor. 1 : 12.) Ah, yes, a good conscience is a soft pillow.

3. On the other hand, the vicious are never really happy. No matter how rich or prosperous they may be, no matter how high or brilliant their station, how exquisite their luxuries and delights, they are pursued, day and night, by the tormenting reproaches of conscience. Every pious word that the sinner hears,—the whisper of the wind, the shadow of night, even the sight of a virtuous man, causes him unspeakable pain and anguish. On every side the words : “ You are the enemy of your God,” seem to stare him in the face. Alas ! in what horrid pictures did not the Gentiles represent to themselves the tortures which the wicked suffer from their own conscience ? They called them the torments of Orkus, which are ceaselessly renewed ;—the pains of Tantalus whose hunger and thirst were never to be satisfied ; they compared the efforts of the wicked to obtain peace and content to the toil of Sisyphus exhausting itself in vain exertions. Prometheus bound to the rock, his heart eaten by a vulture yet continually growing for a renewed torture—is their fitting simile for the unceasing agony of a bad conscience. The Book of Wisdom, after enumerating the possible, and manifold, punishments of the godless, finally adds : “ Yea, and even without these, they might have been slain with one blast, persecuted by their own deeds.” (Wisd. 11 : 21.)

The sinner must bear the sufferings of this life without consolation. He does not know the sweet grief of repentance which accepts all afflictions as penance for sin, and kisses the punishing hand of God; he has no recompense to expect from what he suffers. In impotent anger and despair he kicks against the goad which wounds him. Only by compulsion, like an animal driven to the shambles, he carries the cross which he has placed upon his own shoulders, and all his efforts to shake it off prove fruitless.

But what shall I say of those torments of the soul occasioned by unruly passions, sinful inclinations and desires, and the temptations of Satan? Deprived of their centre—God—sinners are not able to control and conquer these rebellions of corrupt nature, but are dragged along by them against their will to their own torment.

Where, then, is happiness to be found? Will you not say with the Sacred Scripture, "Much peace have they that love thy law?" (Ps. 118 : 165.) "Who hath resisted him (God), and hath had peace?" (Job 9 : 4). "The wicked hath told me fables, but not as thy law." (Ps. 118 : 85.)

II. The virtuous walk under God's special protection, whilst the vicious are deprived of the blessing of God.

1. God's Providence (that is, his holy will) governs the world. We cannot imagine God as the Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of the world without being sure and certain of his divine Providence. Sacred Scripture teaches us, by oft-repeated assurances, this sweet and encouraging truth. (Job 5 : 6 ; Col. 1 : 16, 17.)

Believing it firmly, we deny a blind fate or accident in the affairs of life. Prosperity and adversity, happiness and misery, blessing and calamity, are not aimlessly blown into the houses of men by a whirlwind; it is the hand of God which carries them there. Must we not then conclude that God cares with a special love for his friends and elect, and favors them with his protection and aid? Look at the history of the people of Israel—how the hand of God guided them for thousands of years! What the Lord once did for them, he continues to do for all generations, to those who acknowledge him for their God and Father. The beautiful words of the Prophet which once he spoke over his holy inheritance upon earth, his chosen people (Is. 43 : 4), are applicable to each individual soul that loves him. "For the sake of the elect," writes St. Paul (2 Tim. 2 : 10); and our Lord has assured us that at the end of the world, the days of tribulation shall be shortened on account of the elect.

All the divine promises announced in the Sacred Scripture, we behold confirmed in the lives of his servants. *Abel*, the just man, en-

joyed the divine friendship. His sacrifice was acceptable to God and blessed by him. *Abraham* walked perfectly before the eyes of God, and out of his seed came forth the Redeemer. *Jacob* was protected on his way when he fled before his brother, and when he sojourned in the house of his father-in-law. God even blessed *Laban* for Jacob's sake. How wonderfully did he conduct *Joseph of Egypt* from a prison-cell to the height of power, from being a captive-slave to be the ruler of Egypt; and how splendidly has he not glorified himself in *Moses*, his chosen instrument. Add to this what the Sacred Scripture says of *David* and *Samuel*, *Tobias* and *Susanna*, *Jonas* and *Daniel*, and what we know of the Saints of the New Testament, and the truth must become clearer and dearer to us, that God interests himself, and cares with a particular love, for the virtuous.

2. The wicked are abandoned by God, separated from him, and therefore deprived of all his help and assistance. They are like a flock without a shepherd, a ship without a helm, an army without a general. This, again, we learn from many examples in the Sacred Scripture. (Prov. 11 : 16 ; Ps. 7 : 17.) *Cain*, after his sin, walked the earth a fugitive, filled with anguish and despair. *The sons of Jacob* stand affrighted, trembling, and tormented by hunger, before their brother Joseph whom they had sold. *Pharaoh*, the oppressor of the Israelites, perished in the Red Sea. *Aman*, the haughty statesman, dies on the gallows which he had built for Mardochai. Shall I speak of *Saul* and *Roboam*, *Jezabel* and *Athalia*? Shall I point to the miserable end of *Antiochus*, *Herod*, and *Judas*? Think you God is more lenient in our days than when he visited the vices of men with such terrible punishments? Will he weigh the deeds of men with other scales, and bestow the care of a father upon his inveterate enemies? True, Holy Writ tells us that God does not withdraw all his blessings from sinners. He rains upon the just and unjust and makes his sun shine upon the good and the bad. Material prosperity, temporal blessings, oftentimes, fall more to the share of the wicked than of the good. But the temporal prosperity of the wicked is a dangerous thing, an ominous gift of God. It is, in most cases, a payment in advance for the little good which they have done upon earth—a trifling reward for the meagre services they have rendered to him. Which portion will you choose? That of the virtuous who are guided by the hand of God through sufferings to greater happiness, or that of the vicious from whom he turns his eyes, and to whom he gives few and perishable goods—the dross of this earth, in order to punish them the more terribly hereafter?

III. The blessings of the Christian life are best known in the hour



of death. Death is a very serious teacher, showing truth and justice in their native colors. Many who have spent their lives in seeking happiness in sensual pleasures, have recognized too late the truth, that virtue alone gives real happiness. Let us consider first the godless sinner in the untold misery of that hour, and then the joyous and peaceful death of the virtuous man.

1. There, in a royal chamber, surrounded by pomp and riches, lies Antiochus who had pillaged the city of Jerusalem and the holy temple, and polluted its altars. The pains of death rage within him; he tosses himself on his bed in anguish from side to side. His friends and servants endeavor to quiet and to console him, his physicians do their utmost to relieve him, but their words and their skill are fruitless. Hear how the wretched dying sinner sighs and laments: "Now I remember the evils that I have done in Jerusalem," etc. (1 Mach. 6 : 12.)

Looking upon the past, his appalling crimes arise before him. The savage cruelty with which he shed the blood of his fellow-men, the profanation of the holy place, the robbery and sacrilege committed therein, the murders, pillages, desecration and ruin of which he was the author,—all these now stand glaring upon him, like hungry monsters waiting for their prey, from whose deadly grasp no power can free him. His sins stand before him in all their undisguised malice; they now appear in a different light from that in which he beheld them in the time of temptation, and the turmoil of passion. Such is the state of every dying sinner who contemplates his or her past life. Forgotten sins, which were committed in reckless passion, and never repented of, come forth now from every nook and corner of the heart. The doubtful confessions, the imperfect and invalid repentances, mingle in this terrible picture of sin and vice, and increase the anguish of the sinner. "Now I remember the evils," etc.

*The present* is not likely to give him any consolation or lessen the terror of his heart. Antiochus looks around, his servants and courtiers gaze upon him in pity and consternation, but they can render him no service now. His gold and silver, and all his precious belongings, now desert him. No earthly splendor can soothe or satisfy. Tortured by the reproaches of his conscience, relieved and consoled by no hope, the king lies upon his hard bed of death.

But the thought of *the future* torments him the most. He has offended the God of Israel, and polluted his sanctuary. He despised the threats of the Jews, that their Lord would avenge the sacrilege. He despised the voice of his conscience which endeavored to restrain him from injustice. Now he thinks of the living God, into whose hands he is about to fall; and all the horrors of the pagan Hades are let loose before his eyes.

The thought of eternity always aggravates and intensifies the anguish of the dying sinner. Pride, audacity, and stubborn disobedience to conscience and holy Faith, then give place to abject terror and whining despair. The infidelity which denied God and eternity—judgment and hell, dissolves, like a mist, before that dread *Hereafter* which he knows and believes is every moment drawing nearer and nearer to his affrighted and unprepared soul.

2. Behold the happy face of another dying king—the fitting type of the beautiful hope enkindled in the breast of the virtuous man ! Isaiah the prophet stands beside the death-bed of Ezechias, and announces to him his approaching end. The king raises his eyes toward heaven and says : “ I beseech thee, O Lord, remember how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is pleasing before thee.” (4 Kings 20 : 3.) How sweet, how tenderly consoling to the departing soul is this brief prayer !

Like Ezechias the just man looks without anguish or sadness upon his past life. He walked always before God in truth and justice, loving him with his whole heart, and doing his holy will in all things. His pains, labors, and penances, his alms, his prayers, and good works, all issue forth now from their sweet obscurity, and fill his heart with joy and delight.

The present has no terrors for his soul. The peaceful evening approaches, bringing grateful rest after life's long labor. Death robs him of nothing, since his heart, long ago, detached itself from the perishable goods of the world. The consolations of religion sweeten the pang of parting, and remove all imperfection from his soul. With Moses, he gazes, full of joyful yearning, into the Promised Land of eternity. Thither was his glance directed during his whole mortal life ; the end of his most ardent wishes and hopes has at length arrived. “ Now, O Lord, dismiss thy servant in peace,” he says ; and like a richly laden ship, he enters into the port of eternity.

Compare the life of the sinner with that of the just man, and continue this comparison to the hour of death ; and you must confess (not taking heaven and its reward into consideration at all), that even here below, the recompense of virtue a thousand fold surpasses all the so-called joys and delights of sin. (Wisd. 5 : 7.) Weeping, the wicked are forced to complain at the end of their lives : “ Tired and bloody will be our feet when we arrive at the gate of hell.” But the just journey smilingly to heaven ; and though the Lord conduct them along thorny paths, the briars beneath their feet turn, as they walk, into softest, brightest, and most fragrant roses. Which will you choose, my beloved—the way of the virtuous or the way of the wicked ?

BISHOP EHRLER.

## SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## THE DESECRATION OF SUNDAYS AND HOLYDAYS.

*“And Jesus answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees saying: Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?” (Luke 14: 3.)*

The Scribes and Pharisees were always watching for an opportunity of putting the virtue and sanctity of our Lord to the test. To-day, they brought before him a man sick of the dropsy, and, as they well knew the goodness of our Saviour, they were curious to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath. According to their manner of thinking, this was unlawful. Our Lord read their thoughts, and, in order to show them that he saw them he asked them: “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day?” But they were dumb, and could not answer his question. He then healed the sick man, wishing by this action to enlighten those hypocrites, and to show them that this work of mercy in no way violated the law of God. Beloved brethren, how many of us consider certain things as lawful on holydays and Sundays which are forbidden; and, on the contrary, many things as unlawful which are permitted. I propose to-day to disabuse you of this error and to set plainly before you

I. *Those things which are forbidden* and

II. *Those which are commanded.*

I. *What is forbidden?*

1. *Servile works* and

2. *The works of Satan*, are forbidden.

1. God himself has commanded abstinence from servile works on Sundays. “And he blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, he had rested from all his work. (Gen. 2: 3.) The Sabbath of the Jews was the seventh day of the week, or Saturday; that of the Christians is the first day, or Sunday. “But on the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no work on it.” (Exod. 20: 10.) The meaning of this is, “thou shalt do no *servile* work,” as is explained in another part of the Mosaic law. “The seventh day also shall be most solemn and holy unto you; you shall do no servile work therein.” (Num. 28: 25.) Thus we see that servile works are forbidden but not works of mercy, nor of necessity. These points are often explained, both in general from the pulpit, and in particular, in the confessional.

2. There are, I fear, many who understand the commandment of resting from labor to mean a permission for idleness. These people pretend to scruple a half-hour spent in servile work on Sunday, while, at the same time, they make no account of wasting the greater part of the day in gambling, drinking, and other sinful actions. Hypocrites ! do you call *this* sanctifying the Lord's day ? "No man can serve two masters." (Matth. 6 : 24.) You serve Satan on the very day which has been set apart for the service of God. "It is better to dig than to dance," says St. Augustine. There is no work more servile than sin. "Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity," says the Psalmist. (Ps. 5 : 7.) "Draw me not away together with the wicked ; and with the workers of iniquity, destroy me not." (Ps. 27 : 3.) This is the kind of servile work which is specially forbidden on Sundays and festivals. On those days, we should devote ourselves entirely to the service of God, and should renounce that of his enemy, the devil.

## II. We are commanded to devote the Sundays

1. *To the worship of God,*
2. *To acts of virtue.*

On the seventh day, God rested from the work of creation ; but not from holy works, which he performs continually and uninterruptedly. Our Saviour himself says : "My Father worketh until now, and I work," (John 5 : 17) as if to give us an example that we should set aside worldly occupations on Sundays, and engage ourselves only in spiritual works. St. Augustine, contrasting the Jewish observance of the Lord's day with that of the Christians, says : "The Jews keep their Sabbath in a material, idle, and sinful manner. They make a jest of it, and, although God has commanded them to keep holy the Sabbath day, they, yet do, on this day, that which the Lord has forbidden. But we Christians, on the contrary, rest, indeed, from evil but not from good, works." We should chiefly sanctify this day by devout attendance at church, by hearing Mass, (which cannot be omitted under pain of mortal sin) by listening to sermons, by receiving holy Sacraments, and other pious acts. For in these consists the sanctification of the day.

2. Besides the worship of God, we are recommended to practise other good works. For although the practice of any one virtue is not expressly commanded by God, yet it is impossible to spend the day in a manner pleasing to him, unless we practise some virtue. Nature and reason admonish us to apply certain days to God's service and the furtherance of our own salvation, since he has given us all the rest of the time to spend in worldly occupations. On Sunday we should set

aside worldly business, and devote ourselves to prayer, in order that by it we may obtain pardon for the shortcomings of the past week. "Be still, and see that I am God!" (Ps. 45 : 11.) These words teaching us what we should do, and avoid, on holy days. We must do no servile work, and must rest from our worldly avocations ; but we must also sanctify those days, by praying, meditating, honoring and adoring God. We must follow the instructions of the prophet Isaias, who says : "Cease to do perversely, learn to do well ; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge for the fatherless, defend the widow." (Isai. 1 : 16, 17.) In short, practise works of Christian charity, as our Saviour did in the Gospel of to-day. Then, you will sanctify the holy-days.

You have just heard, my dear Christians, what is forbidden and what is permitted on Sundays and holydays. Let us, for the future, religiously apply one day in seven to the service of God. "Is it not ridiculous in us," says St. Chrysostom, "that we expect our servants to be constantly employed in our labor, while we ourselves are unwilling to render the smallest service to God?" "Is it not the height of folly," he says in another place, "to make such great preparations on the approach of a festival, to procure fine dresses and costly dinners, and to make every possible exertion for the adornment of the body, while at the same time no preparation is made for the benefit of the soul?" It is of such people that God speaks by the mouth of his prophet Amos, saying : "I hate and have rejected your festivities : and I will not receive the odor of your assemblies." (Amos 5 : 21.) Amen. B.



## SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE SUNDAY.

*"And Jesus answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying : Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day ?" (Luke 14 : 3.)*

Our present Gospel shows us how strictly the Old Law exacted the observance of the Sabbath. Amid thunder and lightning, the awful voice of God was heard of old resounding from the clouds that enveloped Mount Sinai, saying : "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day." (Exod. 20 : 8.) According to the Mosaic law death was the penalty for violating this command. The Jewish people were so thoroughly penetrated with the dignity and sanctity of the Lord's day, that they even looked upon a charitable deed, performed thereon, as sinful, and not permissible.

Our Saviour, in to-day's Gospel, however, instructs us as to the extent and limit of this command. According to his doctrine, the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. "But he taking him, healed him, and sent him away."

Now-a-days, the world has fallen into an opposite error from that which misled the Jewish people. The scrupulous exactness of the latter has given place, alas ! to a shameful indifference to, and abuse of, the Lord's day. Servile work, vulgar traffic, and sinful amusements are carried on on Sundays as on week-days. Mass and Vespers are neglected ; and the devil reaps a richer harvest on those days than the Lord does. Pride makes its triumphal march, immodesty and intemperance celebrate their shameful orgies, and blasphemy and quarreling profane the day of the Lord.

We will, therefore, make the important duty of sanctifying the Sunday, the subject of our present instruction. I propose to prove that we are bound to fulfil this duty :

- I. *Because we are men ;*
- II. *Because we are Christians ; and*
- III. *Because the desecration of the Sunday is followed by ruinous consequences.*

I. As the human eye is made for the light, and is only healthy and sound when it is permitted to exercise its powers in its brightness, so the human heart is made for God, and is only well and happy, when it

responds to its inward impulse by offering its devotions and adorations to the Author of its being.

1. This duty is so sacred and essential, that the Lord, who has created us only to love and serve him, has a right to every minute and second of our lives. But, when he demands of us only one day in the week, for his especial service, who does not, at once, perceive the reasonableness of such a command? In obedience to the will of God, man must devote one day in seven to him who is the Author of life, his Maker and Judge, in order to praise his omnipotence, his majesty and glory, to adore his infinite wisdom and love! On this day he should pray especially for the salvation of his own soul, and for that of all mankind. Is not, then, the sanctification of the Sunday the first duty of humanity? He who devotes six days to the service of the world, and grudges the seventh day to the honor of his God, mistakes the object of his existence, and renounces the service of his Lord. Thus, we see that the desecration of the Sunday is a renunciation of God's service, a denial of his supremacy over us, and a complete separation from the Lord of life.

2. From the beginning of time, God instituted a certain day to be consecrated to his worship. He sanctified that day by his own example, giving us to understand that through the whole extent of creation, he wished one day in seven to be set apart for his service. "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day!" he said to his chosen people (Exod. 20 : 9); and under penalty of death was his command enforced: "Keep my Sabbath; for it is holy unto you: he that shall profane it, shall be put to death: he that shall do any work in it, his soul shall perish out of the midst of his people." (Exod. 31 : 14.) Once, when the children of Israel found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath, they led him to Moses and Aaron: "And the Lord said to Moses: Let that man die: let all the multitude stone him without the camp. And when they had brought him out, they stoned him; and he died, as the Lord had commanded." (Num. 15 : 35, 36.) God did not permit the manna to fall from heaven on the Sabbath, so that the people might not perform servile work by gathering it. The Scriptures speak in no less than fifty-nine different places of the sanctification of the Sabbath. They promise the greatest blessings to those who faithfully keep this commandment, while they threaten its violators with the most grievous punishments.

3. The sanctification of Sunday (apart from religion and the command of God) is a necessity of human nature. What is it that ennoble our existence by rendering us happy and content? Is it eating and

drinking, sleeping and waking, working and resting until the sands of life are run down, and the bodily mechanism is worn out? Are we born to consume our lives in an unbroken succession of working-days, until, at last, we sink down into the dust from which we were taken? Then, life would not be worth the living! It would be only a torture and degradation of the human soul, which was formed for higher things. Religion, alone, distinguishes man from the beast, and the Sunday gives him the opportunity of practising his religion according to the dictates of his heart.

4. Who can describe the charm of a Sunday morning? Poets have sung about it, and painters have endeavored to depict it, but no one has succeeded in adequately describing the happiness and content enjoyed, on that day, by the pious Christian. He is surrounded by a holy stillness which is only broken by the solemn tones of the church-bells. Everything in and around the house, which can remind one of toilsome week-day life, is set aside. Clad in his Sunday-best he hastens to the house of God, to listen to his holy Word, which is like the echo from a better world; he prostrates himself before God's holy altar, while an unspeakable happiness fills his heart. Even the poorest and most unhappy, sighing all the rest of the week under the heavy burdens imposed upon him, feels, upon Sunday, that he is a child of God, and rejoices in the nobility of his origin. Does not the sun seem to shine more brightly upon Sunday, and the flowers to bloom more freshly? The day is a glimpse of the lost Paradise; it reminds us of the eternal glory which will be ours after the great week of earthly life is passed. Take away the Sunday, and man is degraded to the level of a machine, which is only valued while it is in working order; or to the condition of a wild beast, hunted to death by his passions!

Hence all the nations of the earth have kept a Sabbath, and solemnized it by abstaining from servile work thereon. The external repose was to them a reminder of the interior repose of the heart in God. May our hands, then, on this day, rest from earthly labors, in order that we may perform our first and highest duty to God, and that our thoughts may be elevated to the contemplation of the everlasting Sabbath, which we hope to enjoy after the toils and troubles of this life.

II. Not only are we bound under the universal law to adore the Lord, and devote certain days to his service, but God has revealed to us a religion, and has ordained a form of worship, which he commands us to practise. He has made us Christians and Catholics; and we are obliged to sanctify the Sunday not merely as men, but, much more, as followers of Christ.

1. From its foundation, Christianity has always had its own external, visible forms of worship. The first believers came together to eat the Food of life, and they persevered in the breaking of bread, and in prayer. From the humble and simple manner in which the early Christians celebrated the holy Sacrifice, arose, by degrees, the noble Christian ritual, whose splendor and beauty challenge our admiration. He who wished to become a member of the Church of Jesus Christ, could only do so by taking part in her worship. Exclusion from the divine mysteries meant excommunication from the Church itself, and separation from Jesus Christ.

2. In the very beginning of her existence, the Church chose, for the solemnization of the Christian mysteries, a different day from the Jewish Sabbath. For very important reasons, she appointed the first day of the week for the adoration of God and the solemnities of Christian worship. On that day, Christ arose from the dead, putting the seal of his holy Resurrection upon the redemption of mankind. On that day, the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles, and perfected the foundations of the infant Church.

3. From the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles, we learn that the first Christians looked upon the Sunday as a holy day. "And on the first day of the week, when we assembled to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, being to depart on the morrow, and he continued his speech until midnight." (Acts 20 : 7.) St. Paul writes to the faithful at Corinth : "On the first day of the week, let every one of you put apart with himself, laying up what it shall well please him ; that when I come, the gatherings be not then to be made." (1 Cor. 16 : 2.) Innumerable are the expressions of the holy Fathers which prove and justify this custom of the Church.

4. To the first Christians, Sunday was something infinitely higher than a reminder of the Sabbath-rest of God ; it was a memorial of the redemption of the world through Jesus Christ, and of the sanctification of the Church by the descent of the Holy Ghost. The fundamental truth of our holy religion, the mystery of the holy Trinity, is the special object of our devotion on Sundays. On that day, we make a public remembrance of the other fundamental doctrines of Christianity. We become sharers in all its graces through their solemn commemoration. The Christian Sunday has superseded the Jewish Sabbath ; and the importance of the former as far exceeds that of the latter as the New Covenant surpasses the Old.

But, as those who desecrate the Sunday do not lead lives worthy of human beings, how can we speak of Christian life apart from sanctifi-

cation of the Sunday? He who fails in this respect, denies God as his sovereign King; he rebels against the only-begotten Son of God, who redeemed him, and against the Holy Ghost, who sanctified him. He despises the mysteries of Christianity, and cuts himself off from a share in all her graces. If the Lord punished the desecration of the Jewish Sabbath by the fearful sentence of stoning to death, what penalty can be heavy enough for him who violates the sanctity of the Christian Sunday?

The Sabbath-breaker, with hypocritical mien, says, nevertheless: "I acknowledge that it is the duty of man to adore the Lord God; I, also, practise my religion. A walk in God's free nature, and praise of his greatness and glory constitute my Sunday service!" But is this all that the Almighty requires of us! Is it all we owe to our Creator? Is that enough to secure us his grace? Certainly it is your duty

"To rise from nature up to nature's God,"

and to praise him in his works, as often as possible. But it is your duty to serve God in the manner that he has commanded you by his Son, who has instituted the holy Sacrifice as the highest and most acceptable offering to his heavenly Father. These sentimental emotions in the open air, these rambles through wood and meadow, will obtain for us neither the pardon of our sins, nor eternal life. In the kingdom of nature, you will find neither graces nor Sacraments, capable of uniting the soul to God.

The Christian Sunday avails us far more than the ancient Sabbath did the Jews. The former is consecrated by the commemoration of the holy Trinity, and by the Passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, renewed in the august sacrifice of the altar. Through a participation in the Christian mysteries, we become sharers in the grace of Jesus Christ. By keeping the festivals of the Saints, we enter into closer communion with our Saviour, so that by sanctifying them in the fullest sense, those days may become, indeed, days of salvation for us.

III. A powerful means of deterring us from desecrating the Sunday, is a serious reflection upon *the pernicious consequences which always follow this sin*. The kingdom of grace is built upon that of nature. These two kingdoms stand in the closest relationship. Every sin against the order of grace will have a reflex action against that of nature. He that contemns God's commands will feel, even in his life, the consequences of his misdeeds. We can have no assurance of earthly happiness, except by faithfully obeying God's precepts.

1. The violation of the Third Commandment seems to be followed by more terrible punishments than that of any other precept. The desecration of the Sunday is the ruin of the individual members of so-



ciety, as well as of the moral life of the community. In those places where the Sunday is not sanctified, man's reason no longer comprehends the truths of religion, his thoughts are turned aside from his high aim, and he is wholly given up to worldly cares and occupations. The human soul longs for the nourishment of truth, and the understanding of the poorest and lowliest of men hungers after this bread as much as that of the most learned doctor of divinity. The rays of the sun are as necessary to the humble grass by the wayside as they are to the most gorgeous flowers of the garden. Man's spirit must be refreshed, from time to time, with nobler and better thoughts; otherwise, he will crawl in the dust of earth, and be eternally lost.

2. But who shall supply us with this bread of truth? The majority of men go through life with their backs bent under the burden of toil, their eyes fixed upon the earth. Solicitude for their daily bread leaves them but little time to refresh their spirits by hearing sermons or reading pious books. The Sunday, only, with its prayers and devotions, its sermons and instructions and other practices of religion, is capable of awakening in the human heart the desire for higher and better things. Take away the Sunday, and man will be stifled in the dust of earth or become as a brute, groveling in the mire of mere sensual lust.

3. The desecration of the Sabbath is equally ruinous to the heart of man. The more the Lord's day is dishonored, the greater will be the degradation and the brutalization of the human race. The most daring contempt of all divine and human laws will be the result of a violation of this commandment. While the faithful Christian, through the conscientious keeping of Sundays and holy days, gains new strength to combat his passions and to endure courageously the burdens of the coming week, these last become doubly heavy to the violators of the Sabbath. He who spends Sundays in the gratification of his sensual desires, destroys his own happiness, and surrenders himself unresistingly to the power of his passions.

4. Even the body itself experiences the ruinous effects of disregarding the Sabbath. Nature will not suffer itself to be continuously overburdened; unintermitting labor begets torpidity and aversion, and thus man is physically ruined. At the time of the French Revolution, they tried to upset the ordinance of God. The infidels of that period decided that they would alter the divisions of time, and appointed every tenth day as a day of rest. But the people objected to the fatigues of such a week, and even the animals had reason to reproach the sages of those days with setting aside the divine ordinance instituted for the physical well-being of both man and beast.

Such a crime must, sooner or later, make its consequences felt in the great life of human society. Through it, the hand which unites the members of that great family, is dissolved and wholly destroyed. If a household no longer unite in prayer, if the parents and children, relatives and dependents, have no friendly intercourse with each other, especially on Sundays and festivals, what is there to keep up the spirit of family life? If each individual goes his own way of labor or pleasure on Sundays, and refuses to join the other members of the family in praise of the Almighty Father of all, then all home life will be destroyed, and with it all its beneficial effects upon public life. Thus we see that the life of the family, as well as that of the individual, is based only upon God and religion, and that without these foundations it is not possible.

5. Lastly, remember that all depends upon God's blessing. "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it." (Ps. 126 : 1.) God revenges himself on those who despise his commandments. The man that will not have him for his God, shall not have him for his Father and Friend; and he that would resist the omnipotent arm of God, will be forced to succumb. Experience has shown, continually, that misfortune visits the Sabbath-breaker. The impoverishment of the masses, in spite of all the discoveries and progress of our times, and notwithstanding all the means of help at man's command, the threatening spectre of a dissatisfied commonalty, which shows its grinning teeth to the terror of enlightened Europe and America, are, for the most part, the fruits of desecration of the Sunday. Let us all strike our breasts and promise the Lord, (each in his own state,) to keep holy the Sabbath day. Christian fathers and mothers! never permit your children or servants to violate the Sunday. Set them an example by the fulfilment of your own Christian duties. Do not fear temporal losses by so doing. No one ever became poor through fidelity to God's laws; while, on the other hand, thousands have been ruined by sin and vice. I could tell you of cities in which every industry prospers, and in which all branches of commerce meet, but in which, nevertheless, the Sunday is strictly observed. Why is not this possible with us? Who can compel you to follow a bad custom that has become general? Have you not sufficient courage to keep this holy commandment? Ah! be brave and consistent Christians, and the keeping of this earthly Sabbath will lead you, one day, when the great week of this life is ended, to the eternal peace and happiness of the everlasting Sabbath of eternity! Amen.

BISHOP EHRLER.

## SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## HEAVEN.

*"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and first commandment."* (Matth. 22 : 37, 38.)

The great point of argument among the Scribes and doctors of the law was "Which is the great commandment in the law?" Some of them believed it to be the command to sanctify the Sabbath, whilst others gave the preference to the law of circumcision. To-day, our Saviour decides this important question, saying: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and first commandment." God created man that he might love him in this world as well as in the next; and this love is to be the means, as well as the end, of human happiness. The hope of eternally loving God, the highest and most amiable Good, should be the main-spring of our heart-felt love of him in this valley of tears. Thus, every man can, if he will, reach his final aim, which is God, and can see the road to this goal; because Christ himself is "the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world." (John 1 : 9.) Through his advent, our Saviour has opened the gates of Paradise, which were closed by the sin of Adam. He descended from heaven, in order that we might be able to ascend into heaven. He has given to the human soul three great powers,—will, memory, and understanding; and our happiness in heaven shall consist in this, that, there, we shall

- I. *Eternally see God, which is the happiness of the understanding;*
- II. *Eternally love him, which is the happiness of the will; and*
- III. *Eternally praise him, which is the happiness of the memory.*

May these three objects of our hope enkindle, afresh, the dying embers of our expiring love of God.

I. "God created man to his own image." (Gen. 1 : 27.) As there are three Persons in one God, so there are three powers in the soul, and these three powers have special joys in heaven. If the soul *see her God* in his essence, what unspeakable happiness! In this life, God appears to whom he pleases, and as he pleases, but not as he is in reality; it is

only in heaven, that we shall behold him as he is in himself. We shall experience, in the Beatific Vision, almost as great satisfaction, as God himself enjoys. For, "we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like to him; because we shall see him as he is." (1 John 3 : 2.) Now, we are an image of God; but (in a certain measure) an imperfect image; now we see God only by faith; but then "we all, beholding the glory of the Lord with face uncovered," shall be "transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3 : 18.)

This is *the joy of the understanding*. A learned man knows what satisfaction he feels in acquiring a knowledge of a variety of things. Now, since truth is the object of the understanding, what satisfaction will he not feel when he shall be able to see the Eternal Truth himself in his divine essence—when he can see him who said of himself, "I am the truth"—when he shall see God, and all truth in God?

II. In heaven the soul can *love her God perfectly*. In this valley of tears it pants after God "as the hart panteth after the fountains of water. When shall I come and appear before the face of God?" (Ps. 41 : 2, 3.) Oh, when? when? "Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged!" (Ps. 119 : 5.) The greatest joy of two loving souls is to see each other, to enjoy each other's society, and, as far as possible, to be united to each other.

This, in heaven, is *the joy of the will*; a joy which cannot be increased. For, as love is an effect of the will, so a certain good is the object of love. In this world we love either a real or an apparent good, and this love causes us satisfaction. O, what a superabounding satisfaction shall we not experience in heaven, when our will shall be able to love the Supreme Good in the most perfect manner!

III. The chief employment of the Saints is the *praising of God*. "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord," says the Psalmist. (Ps. 83 : 5.) But, why are they blessed? Because "they shall praise thee forever." Now we sing the praise of God as "in a strange land;" (Ps. 136 : 4) but how delightful will not this employment be when we shall have reached our eternal home. "Here our sighs are prayers, there we shall give true praise; here mourning, there joy," says St. Augustine.

This joy in heaven is *the delight of the memory*. Here, on earth, the memory is haunted by a thousand sorrowful objects; in heaven its only object is he of whom the Psalmist says: "Great is the Lord, and exceedingly to be praised in the city of our God." (Ps. 47 : 2.) "It praises him because it loves him; it loves him because it sees him; consequently, its satisfaction in praising God is as great as its love of

him, and its love is as great as its knowledge of God." (St. Aug.) O, unspeakable joy! O, everlasting contentment! "The eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him." (1 Cor. 2 : 9.) "Behold, your reward is great in heaven." (Luke 6 : 23.) Yes, as great as God is, for he himself has promised, saying : "I am thy reward, exceeding great." (Gen. 15 : 1.) O, that we may all receive this imperishable reward! It lies with ourselves. He that would gain the victory must fight bravely : he that would reap must sow. Answer me : for whom has God prepared these precious treasures? He has prepared them for those who love him. But who really loves him? "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me," says our Saviour ; "and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." (John 14 : 21.) What an exceeding great reward, and upon what easy conditions! In order to love eternally in heaven our most amiable God, and to be happy with him forever, nothing more is required of us than that we should here, upon earth, love him with our whole heart, and should do those things which we would be obliged to do even if there was no hope of such a great reward! My God! of what value is my love? What satisfaction canst thou find in me? What king has ever said to one of his subjects : "Let us be friends, and I will give you, as a reward, a whole kingdom?" But this I ascribe justly to thy goodness, and not to my merits. Thou wishest to be loved, and thou, alone, deservest to be loved. How blind and foolish are we then, if we do not love thee! Amen.

B.



## SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## THE RULE OF FAITH.

*"Therefore, brethren, stand firm, and hold the traditions, which you have learned whether by word or by our epistle." (2 Thess. 2 : 14.)*

We are members of the one, therefore Catholic, Church of the God-Man Jesus, which is spread over all the earth, and built upon the foundation of the Apostles. Complete and pure, as this doctrine—the living word of God—came from the mouth of Jesus,—it was to be preached and preserved to the end of time. For this reason, the Lord on the day of Pentecost sent his Apostles the holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, who should guard them against error, teach them all things, and remind them of all things, whatsoever Jesus had told them. But this Spirit was not to cease with the Apostles. It was to live in their successors and to operate in the work, which, at the behest of the Lord, they had founded. According to Christ's promise, it was to remain with his Church throughout all time. Hence, that Church must have preserved the Christian faith pure and entire through all ages; and hence, the faith, which we profess and which has come down to us by the Apostolical succession, can be no other, than the belief of those truths which Jesus and his Apostles taught.

This we firmly believe; yet, although our faith has cast deep root in our hearts and lives, the spirit of the times imposes upon us, at intervals, the necessity of proving this truth. There are wicked men who labor, with a zeal worthy of a better cause, to cast suspicion upon our holy Church. They urge that her doctrine is not the doctrine of Jesus and his Apostles, and that she is a human institution—not the work of God. They accuse our Church of having supplanted the Scripture by a multitude of arbitrary opinions and laws; that the Apostles taught nothing but what is contained in the New Testament; and that the New Testament is the sole rule of faith, and the supreme arbiter in all matters of controversy.

In the following discourse, I shall show how groundless are these charges. I shall point out the sources of our faith, so that every one can convince himself, if he be not wilfully blinded against the truth, that the doctrines of our Church have really been taught by Christ and his Apostles, and have been believed throughout all centuries. From this investigation, we will see, that the warfare against Catholicity is

nothing short of a warfare against Jesus and his Apostles, since the objections made against our faith are primarily made against the author of our faith, who is Christ Jesus. Let us now consider :

*I. That the divine revelation through Jesus Christ is the source of our faith.*

*II. That the Church derives her whole revelation from Scripture and Tradition.*

I. The source of our faith is the divine revelation through Jesus Christ, or the Gospel, which was preached by Jesus, and which he commissioned his Apostles to preach to the whole world. This revelation began with the creation of the world, and was completed by Christ; it is a historical fact, with internal and external signs and marks by which it is distinguished from human and natural doctrines. By these evidences, it can easily be recognized as the revelation of God ; and human reason (of which it is the light) has not only the power, but also the right, to judge of these marks. Reason must therefore listen to the divine revelation, recognize it as such and receive it, if man would be conducted thereby to his highest destiny. Hence our faith in it, as a real and truly divine revelation, is not a blind faith, but a reasonable faith, which is based on sufficient motives of credibility.

Divine revelation, however, contains facts and doctrines of an incomprehensible nature, such as the Incarnation, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus, the sending of the Holy Ghost, the doctrine of the Triune God, and of the Sacraments. No one has yet been able to prove that what is wonderful and mysterious is impossible. There are mysteries everywhere, even in the natural order, nay, even in what is called the natural religion. Such natural marvels humble our proud reason and convince us that our spiritual nature is weak and imperfect. The incomprehensibility of the sublime truths and doctrines of Revelation clearly proves their origin, in God. If man by the light of reason could arrive at such knowledge, as revelation gives, a divine revelation would not be necessary. A revelation of God must of necessity have mysteries, but while these are higher, deeper, and more extensive than the bounds of reason, they by no means contradict the laws of reason. All that is unknown is not, on that account, unreasonable. The mysteries of faith, however, are not altogether obscure and incomprehensible ; with many of them we see their end, and with all, their possibility and congruity with the highest laws of thought. What is obscure to us now will, one day, be made clear to us,—namely, in that blessed state where faith is no longer needed, and we shall see God face to face.

The religion revealed by God does not annihilate reason as the

adversaries of revealed religion assert ; on the contrary, it ennobles it and leads it on to perfection. Man is to obtain thereby a clear and full knowledge of divine truth. The end of revelation is no other than to lead man to a conscious and perfect union with God. We respect and honor reason as the most brilliant gift of a bountiful Creator ; and our Church never has sought to exalt herself at the expense of reason, as has been done outside her pale ; neither has she over-rated the powers of reason, nor transgressed the limits set by God, nor treated his revelation proudly and contemptuously. When God created man, he breathed into him a rational soul. This divine breath was the first revelation of God to man. From that solemn moment, man bore in himself a knowledge of God, which, although it was afterwards dimmed and obscured by the sin of our first parents, has never been entirely obliterated. This divine power in man enabled him to learn the supernatural from natural things, the invisible from visible things ; and the Creator from the created world. Hence, according to the words of the Apostle, even the heathens are not excusable, if by their reason they do not arrive at the belief of a spiritual order, governed by a higher being than man, whom we call God. In like manner, man could by his reason arrive at other important religious truths, such as heaven and hell, a future reward or punishment ; but reason was not able to grasp all these truths, or solve all its own doubts. Divine revelation, however, steps in, and communicates all truth, puts a stop to all doubts. It is the only true source of religious knowledge, the foundation of faith in Christianity.

Human reason, nevertheless, is variously employed in investigating and explaining the articles of faith. It is able to prove the authenticity of the documents of revelation, to establish their true and right sense, and to derive from them the pure and genuine Christian doctrine. It can collect scattered doctrines, and arrange them so as to constitute a whole series, in which obscure sentences and words receive light and meaning. The last, but not the least, office of reason is to prove the doctrines of Christianity in their interior necessity and reasonableness, as well as in their harmony with itself. This right, the Church always has granted. But, since reason may be deceived by its own lights, the Christian submits his judgment to the Holy Ghost, who lives in the Church to the end of time.

II. But *where is the whole divine revelation, the whole doctrine of Jesus Christ to be found?* In Scripture and tradition, in the written and unwritten word of God, as they are preserved and explained by the Church. We receive the Bible with veneration, because God is its Author ; we give unreserved credit to everything that it contains, and humbly submit to it our weak, natural knowledge. Unknown among

us is a perverted way of explaining the word of God, according to human wisdom, or according to the inspirations of pride or private judgment, of rejecting what surpasses our limited understanding, and of treating this divine book as a book of lies and fables.

But the Bible *is not our sole rule of faith*, for the Apostles wrote only in regard to *particular cases* to *particular congregations* and *persons*. *Nowhere* in their writings do they say, that they intend to write a perfect book of faith and morals. This was neither their end nor their mission; their commission was *to preach*, to instruct by word of mouth. Jesus himself taught orally, and neither he nor seven of his Apostles are ever recorded as having written a single word. Christ commissioned the eleven to go into the whole world and preach, and by preaching the living word of God, and not by writing, they established Christianity throughout the whole world, before a line of the New Testament was written. The Christian world existed, it knew what Christ had taught, observed what he had commanded, and yet never read what was written. The world became Christian by oral teaching and tradition; and oral teaching and traditions are inculcated by the Apostles repeatedly in their writings. They plainly say that the written word is imperfect. Thus, St. Paul praises the Corinthians, because they acted according to the tradition which he had given them; and he exhorts Timothy to commit the sound doctrines, which he had heard from himself before many witnesses, to faithful men, who are capable of teaching others. St. John, also, concludes his Gospel with these words: "But there are also many other things, which Jesus did, which if they were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written."

This proves that not everything is contained in the Bible.

What then do we call *tradition*? What the Apostles have not written, but what they taught by word of mouth. It is the living Gospel, that which existed before the written word of God, and which always had equal authority therewith. Our Church derives her faith from both. Why should the preaching of the Apostles, by which Christianity was planted in the world, without which even the authenticity of the Sacred Scripture cannot be proven, why should it have no value; why should it have lost its power and authority? At all times, appeal was made to the tradition of the Apostles as a means to know the doctrine of Jesus. But the adversaries of tradition say: "The memory of man is deceptive; traditions are subject to corruption, and may vanish in time!" Who denies that? But here we speak of the word of God, of the supernatural order, and we firmly believe that the oral tradition has been handed down to us uncorrupted, and that the memory of the whole Church cannot err in what is the doctrine of Jesus and his Apostles, because we believe the word of Christ that with the Spirit of

Truth, he will remain with his Church for ever. Changes, corruptions of traditions, may have been made by some at certain times and certain places, but the Church preserves her golden rule of faith, *she receives only that as divine doctrine which has been believed by the universal Church at all times and in all places*. Varying opinions are a sign of error, but truth is one, and always remains the same. St. Paul, appealing to this one, unchangeable, and eternal truth of the divine word, complains of some Galatians who suffered themselves to be imposed upon by new teachers: "I wonder that you are so soon removed from him, who called you to the grace of Christ, to another Gospel, which is not another, only there are some who trouble you and would pervert the Gospel of Christ!" And the same Apostle gives us this solemn advice: "Therefore, brethren, stand firm, and hold the traditions which you have learned by word or by our epistle."

Tradition breathes life and spirit into the Scripture, and throws light on the dead letter, especially on obscure and ambiguous passages. To the clear and plain passages it gives the highest proof of certainty, and convinces us that the truth of which the Scripture speaks has been understood and taught in the very same way by the Apostles themselves. Other doctrines which the Apostles taught, and of which they say little in their writings, complete the Scriptures, and give them the right sense and understanding. Thus, only by tradition we know that Jesus instituted the seven Sacraments of the Church.

I will not speak here of Baptism and the Blessed Eucharist, because these are mentioned in the Scripture, and are received even by those who reject tradition. I will only speak of the other five sacraments, *of whose institution by Christ tradition leaves no doubt*. In the Acts of the Apostles, we read of the Sacrament of *Confirmation*: "When the Apostles had heard, that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who when they were come prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost, for he was not yet come upon any of them. Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost!" St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, says: "The same is yet done among us, that those who have been baptized by the imposition of the hands and the prayer of the Bishop, receive the Holy Ghost." Jesus instituted the Sacrament of *Penance*, when he said to his Apostles: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." But as sins can be forgiven only to the penitent, and are to be retained to the unworthy, Jesus made the forgiveness of sin dependent on the confession thereof. "Confess your sins one to another," says St. James. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, so as to forgive us our sins. In the Acts of the Apostles we read: "That the faithful came to confess and to declare their sins." St. Cyprian says: "Let every one confess his



sins, as long as he lives, and as long as the confession can be received, as long as the pardon granted by the priest is acceptable to God."

The Sacrament of *Extreme Unction* is based upon the words of St. James: "Is any man sick among you? let him bring in the priests of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." Tradition tells us, that unction of the sick has always been held in the Church as a Sacrament. Out of many testimonies, I will quote for you the words of St. Augustine: "The sick man shall receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, and his body shall be anointed with oil, that what is written may be fulfilled: 'Is any man sick among you?' Behold, he who in his sickness has recourse to the Church, merits the health of the body and the forgiveness of his sins."

In the Sacrament of *Holy Orders* by prayer and the imposition of hands according to apostolic prescription, the power is given to preach the doctrine of Christ, and to administer the Sacraments. As Jesus made his Apostles his representatives, saying, "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you," and as he commissioned them to teach, and to forgive sins, and to celebrate the holy mysteries, so the Apostles appointed others in their place to do the same. St. Augustine, speaking of the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Orders, says: "If both are Sacraments, which no one doubts, why shall the one be lost and the other be retained?" In his Epistle to the Ephesians, St. Paul compares *Matrimony*, or the union of wife and husband, to the union of Jesus with his Church. From this, it is already evident that such is not possible without the grace of God. He calls *Matrimony* a great Sacrament, but only in Christ and in his Church. The whole Christian Church has always held *Matrimony* as a Sacrament.

Now, although there are proofs in the Bible for every one of the Sacraments, it would, however, be impossible to establish the number of Sacraments, if tradition was not our guide. Hence it comes that those who have seceded from the Mother Church and rejected her traditions, admit some only two, some three Sacraments. He that rejects tradition must declare the washing of the feet, which Jesus performed at his Last Supper as a Sacrament, since that act contains all the constituents of a Sacrament—the visible sign, the grace of God, and the institution of Christ. From what other source can he know, that the washing of the feet is not a Sacrament, if not from tradition? Hence, we say, tradition explains and completes the written word of God.

If the living spirit be separated from the dead letter, if the apostolic tradition be rejected, and if one hold nothing but the written word of God, which without authoritative interpretation is subject to all possi-

ble interpretations, what will be the consequences? Experience and history show the consequences. Separated from the sure rule of faith, a number of sects arose—each condemning and contradicting the other, and whose sole agreement consists in disagreement. Dethroning and rejecting tradition, and admitting the Bible as the only rule of faith, they have introduced doubt, scepticism, and infidelity, and in our days, hardly speak of faith, but only of moral conduct. But there is no Christian morality without faith. The morality must be based on the belief in Christ Jesus and on obedience to his Church. But now, men preach a Christianity without mysteries; a gospel without articles of faith, a purely human morality which has no divine sanction or authority. Human institutions are defective, changeable, and perishable, like their authors. But the word of God is immutable. The Church has never changed one iota of her doctrine, but teaches now what she taught eighteen hundred years ago. We have the same doctrines which the first Christians heard from the mouth of the Apostles. The Lord has built his Church upon a rock; and after all losses, injuries, calamities, and persecutions she has proved for the last eighteen centuries, what she was in the beginning: the pillar and the ground of truth. Amen.

A. W. O. S. B.

## SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## SEVEN SORROWS OF B. V. M.

*"There stood by the Cross of Jesus, his Mother."* (John 19 : 25.)

It is the beloved disciple, St. John the Evangelist, who describes the touching event briefly recorded in the Gospel of this Festival. He was an eye-witness and an actor in the scene. We see him, as we picture to ourselves the tragic event of Calvary, standing upon one side of the Cross, Mary on the other, and Jesus dying between them. It was an hour of the deepest sorrow : an hour of humiliation : apparently an hour of the world's complete triumph over Christ and his gospel.

Yet, my dear brethren, the Church, to-day, is not ashamed of that hour's work, nor of those who stood by to witness it. She celebrates it now as a festival of joy. She interrupts the usual sequence of the Sundays, and bids us, on this happy Sabbath day of the New Testament, commemorate our holy Mother's share in an act which brought such joy to the world, at the expense of so much sorrow. Here we find the Gospel principle clearly demonstrated. The seed must die, before it can produce its fruit. There is humiliation enough, indeed, but it is a humiliation which is to be rewarded, and which has been rewarded, beyond all proportion. First the Cross, and then the Crown. The voice and an authority of the Church, which we gladly obey, bids us to-day, contemplate her who was Queen of Sorrows, here below, in order that she might, one day, above become the Queen of Glory. Let us then proceed leisurely to consider :

I. *The Dolors of the Blessed Mother of God, and*

II. *Their results to herself and to us.*

I. Consider first what Mary suffered. The Church in the festival of to-day records seven principal occasions of our Lady's sorrows. Three of these occasions belong to the early life of our dear Lord: four to the time of his Passion. The first dolor is attendant on the Presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple, when Simeon after foretelling his contradictions, said to his holy Mother, "And thy own soul a sword shall pierce." (Luke 2 : 35.) From that moment Mary began to experience that deep grief, which the anticipation of unavoidable suffering always produces. The second sorrow was occasioned

by the Flight into Egypt, with all its accompanying circumstances of fear and privations. The third was experienced during the three days' loss of the divine Child, when at the age of twelve years, he remained at Jerusalem after Mary had returned with Joseph to Nazareth. The fourth portrays the painful meeting of the Son and Mother, after he had been condemned to death, and was carrying his Cross up the hill of Calvary. The fifth is that which is expressly mentioned in to-day's Gospel, when the afflicted Mother stood by the Cross, and witnessed the death of her Son. The sixth records the taking down of his Sacred Body from the Cross, and its final repose in his Mother's arms. And the seventh and last bids us contemplate the burial of our dear Lord in the presence of his Mother.

The central sorrow which the Church proposes to our contemplation to-day, is that of the Mother standing by the Cross of her agonizing Son. What must not her sufferings have been at such a time? If the Church asks so beautifully in the touching words of the *Stabat Mater*, "Where is the man who would not weep, if he saw the Mother of Christ sorrowing with her Son?" may we not ask: Where is the mother who would not suffer the most acute pain, if doomed to attend her son in like circumstances? Why was Mary present at such a time? Was it the fitting place for any mother? How could the Blessed Virgin endure so fearful a trial to a mother's feelings? We read of one mother, who shrunk from the trial of seeing her child die in the midst of pain. It was poor Agar, the wife of Abraham, the mother of Ismael. When driven away from her home through the jealousy of Sarah, she took her child with her into the desert, and when she had exhausted their little supply of food and water and she felt that Ismael must soon die of thirst, she laid him under a tree, and ran off to a distance, saying: "*I will not see the boy die.*" (Gen. 21: 16.) Not so the Queen of Martyrs. She was prepared for this bitterest of all trials, and would be faithful to a mother's duty even to the end.

The prophecy of Simeon in the Temple had prepared her for the Agony of the Cross. From the hour of her Child's Presentation to his Eternal Father the sword had been piercing her soul. In her many hours with him at Nazareth, we can imagine how on each recurring Friday they rehearsed the events which were to occur when the predictions which had spoken of him were to be accomplished. Oftentimes, must they have read together the prophecy of Isaias, which said of him upon whom his Mother was then looking with greater love than any mother had ever looked upon a child: "*There is no beauty in him nor comeliness, and we have seen him, and there was no sightliness; . . . despised, the most abject of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity, . . . we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. . . he shall be led as a*

*sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth.*" (Is. 43 : 2, 7.) She was prepared, therefore, for the trial of Good Friday ; like the Valiant Woman, she braced herself up to share in his sufferings. She would not accept the honor of Maternity to such a Son, without fulfilling the duties which she knew that honor entailed.

Her sufferings, however, were none the less intense. Our Blessed Lord was really and truly man ; and she was really and truly his Mother. Whatever kind nature in its sympathies between parent and child suggests to any mother, was suggested to her on that occasion. Every wound inflicted upon Jesus was inflicted upon his Mother also. If St. Paul, in his meditations upon the Passion, was so drawn to our dear Lord that he could say : "*With Christ I am nailed to the Cross,*" how much more truly could his own Mother say the same as she stood close to his side ! And if we, even, at so great a distance of time, and with hearts so cold and so unloving, cannot think of the anguish of those three hours' Agony on the Cross without being moved, what must have been the suffering of that loving and devoted Mother, when she saw the awful reality enacted before her eyes !

Moreover, she was a Virgin-Mother, and that gave her a double share of sorrow. Why is this, my dear brethren ? Because, in ordinary parents nature divides the parental care between the father and the mother. Each has a share, and in proportion to that share, relieves the other. Mary, as you know, was the only earthly parent of our dear Lord. The good St. Joseph had been given to her as the protector of her virginity. He shared, in some degree, the anxieties which accompanied the first years of the Child Jesus. But, it was not the same as if he had been his actual parent, as if nature had supplied him with what every father receives, the natural gift of sympathy with his own flesh and blood. None could have been fitter for the high office for which he had been appointed than the venerable patriarch, St. Joseph. But long before the time of the Passion, he had gone to his reward. The protection he had given his immaculate spouse in Bethlehem, Egypt, and Nazareth was wanting at Calvary. The widowed Mary at the foot of the cross had no one to share her solicitude or her anguish. Hence, her sorrow pressed upon her with double weight.

Mother of a divine Son ! of One whom she loved as no son could have been loved before. A mother's love is generally proportioned to the virtues and goodness of the child. A bad son is no comfort to a mother : he is an anxiety and a source of trial, and his removal by death may even be a relief to a mother whom he ought to have solaced, but has only afflicted. But what was the perfection of Jesus ! How we love him who are so unworthy of such a privilege ! But how must



she have loved him, who was herself so capable of loving, and who knew so intimately what was the love of his Sacred Heart. What, then, must have been her sorrow, as she stood mourning at the foot of his Cross ! Well might she exclaim : “ *O all ye who pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow !* ” (Lament. 1 : 12.)

II. But you may, perhaps, ask why should Mary have been required to suffer so much, or even to suffer at all ? As suffering was the result of sin, ought not she, who was absolutely sinless, have been exempted from this consequence of sin ? But no, my dear brethren. Although Mary was immaculate, it was not God’s will that she should be dispensed from suffering. Three reasons existed why she should suffer.

1. It was fitting that she should suffer because she was *the Mother of a suffering Son*. Can we imagine it otherwise ? He who came to redeem us, came without sin, but he came on purpose to take upon himself the punishment due to our sins, so that by his stripes we might be saved. “ *We have not a high-priest,*” says St. Paul, “ *who cannot have compassion on our infirmities ; but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin.* ” (Heb. 4 : 15.) Mary was his Mother, and being the Mother of the Man of Sorrows, her life as a mother was consequently a life of sorrow. If Jeremias wept so bitterly over Jerusalem because of his love for that city, why should not she who so loved her Son, weep and lament with him ? And we see that all her seven dolors concern him. This attached an immense value to her sufferings ! For you know, when we have to endure our own little pains or trials how often we are exhorted to unite them with those of our dearest Lord. We look at a Crucifix, and think of him, who bore so much and with such patience for our sakes, and we are encouraged to support our crosses. So with Mary, all that she suffered was with Jesus and for Jesus ; and hence, we see the fitness of her sorrows.

2. It was fitting also that she should suffer *for her own sake*. For she had to earn her salvation, and her future glory, and this was to be gained by suffering. We cannot forget how nobly St. Paul speaks of the great glory due to the Holy Name of JESUS, and to him who bore that Name : but he tells us how that glory was purchased : “ *He humbled himself, and he became obedient even to the death of the Cross, therefore* ” (Phil. 2 : 8) did he acquire his Glory. And the same truth was declared by our Lord himself just after his Resurrection, when, to his two disciples he said : “ *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so enter into his Glory ?* ” (Luke 24 : 26.) Gladly, then, did she accept the condition which was to result in the future

glory in Heaven. Since she was to be next to her Son in that kingdom, she would be nearest to him in suffering here below. The joy of St. Paul in his tribulations, could not equal hers. She could say more truly than he : "*We glory also in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience trial, and trial hope, and hope confoundeth not.*" (Rom. 5 : 5.) In her case, after the Cross was to come the Crown ; and she would be no exception to the rule, that "*by many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.*"

3. *For our sake*, also, it was fitting that she should suffer. Our Divine Lord suffered for us for two reasons : to redeem us, and to set us an example. Mary did not suffer for us in order to redeem us, for that she could not do. The One Mediator alone could satisfy the justice of God for our sins. But as our Mother, she could set us an example ; she could show us with what fortitude we should bear our sufferings, and unite them (as she did hers) with those of her Son. And although she could not merit for us our salvation, yet indirectly, through her sufferings, her help has been to us of much greater efficacy. For, if we believe what St. James tells us in his lessons upon prayer, that we ought to "*pray for one another,*" and that "*the continual prayer of the just man availeth much,*" (James 5 : 16) in proportion as she by her patience in tribulation made herself more acceptable in the sight of God, so has her intercessory power increased before the throne of God, in behalf of those for whom her Son shed the precious Blood which he had received from her.

When, then, we remember the result of those hours of suffering at the foot of the Cross, we can view this festival in the light in which the Church celebrates it. It is even a festival of joy, and is celebrated upon a Sunday. In Passion-week, when we last commemorated these Sorrows of our Lady, there was no room for joy. It was on the Friday before Good Friday, and we were too much taken up in those days with the mysteries of the Cross, to anticipate the joy which was withheld from us until the Easter solemnity. But not so to-day. Contemplating the sufferings of our Mother, we are not to dwell upon them alone, but to encourage ourselves by the blessings which resulted therefrom both for herself and us.

Consider, then, in as lively a manner as possible, the great scene of Calvary, but view it as St. John describes it to you. We cannot conceive the mystery of Bethlehem without the presence of Mary. Neither will St. John allow us to contemplate Calvary without that divine Mother. It is to her and of her, the dying Son addresses the last words he spoke to any creature. His last legacy bequeaths his Mother to his beloved disciple, and the disciple to his beloved Mother. After that, he speaks no more, except to his Father, to whom he com-

mends his Spirit, when all is consummated. It is a comfort and an encouragement for us to see poor Magdalene there, also, at the foot of the Cross. Not a word of rebuke is addressed to her, as she takes her place beside those feet which she had once anointed, kissed, and bathed with tears. Mary does not turn to her, and say that it is owing to her, owing to all earth's sinners that her Son is now suffering his cruel torments. No; she shared her Son's love for penitent sinners, and the presence of Magdalene was one of Mary's mitigations of the sufferings of that terrible day. Here was one soul washed clean, and restored to its virginal innocence; and to the Refuge of Sinners, this brought some relief in that hour of woe.

We who feel that we have two great graces to pray for, pardon for our past sins, and final perseverance in our good resolutions, must, to-day, ask for them with the fullest confidence that they will not and cannot be refused us. It is through the precious Blood of our dear Saviour that pardon has been purchased for us; and it is through the tears and prayers of his Mother and our Mother, standing by the side of his Cross, that we hope for the gift of final perseverance. "*Forget not the sorrows of thy mother,*" (Ecclus. 7 : 29) is the command of Almighty God given to us by the Wise Man, and it is a command which even nature bids us respect and obey. We can imagine her who stood by so bravely witnessing the martyrdom of her Son, addressing each of us, as did the noble mother of the Maccabees, who witnessed the execution of her seven sons, and encouraged them to persevere to the end—begging us to have pity upon her, (2. Mach. 7 : 27) and not make ourselves unworthy of her own heroic example. She was the Mother of Christ, but she is ours also. Remember his Blood, and remember her tears; both were shed for us: one to redeem, the others to encourage and assist us. By prayer, by sorrow, and by a good and generous resolution, let us strive to gain the advantage which our station at the foot of the Cross can secure for us, so that we may be of the happy number of those who have been redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb, and have had the merits of that precious Blood secured and applied to us through the prayers and sorrows of his Mother! Amen.

SWEENEY, O. S. B.

## EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## ENVY.

*“Why do you think evil in your hearts?” (Matth. 9 : 4.)*

In to-day's Gospel, our Saviour cures a man sick of the palsy; and the Jews think within themselves: “This man blasphemeth.” How is it that these men mistake an act of charity for the crime of blasphemy? St. Ambrose gives the reason: “Thereby they betrayed *their envy*, which acts contrary to all laws of charity, and converts the most striking proofs of love into hatred.” To-day, then, I propose to draw a picture of this unmanly vice, for your instruction. I will show you how wicked and unhappy the envious man is; for envy is

I. *A great sin; and*

II. *A great torment to the sinner.*

I. We may judge of the greatness of this sin

1. *From its source, and*

2. *From its object.*

1. Envy generally springs from pride. This is a truth that cannot be contradicted. The Apostle makes this understood when he says: “Let us not become desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, *envying* one another.” (Gal. 5 : 26.) Quarrelling and envy both arise from pride and vain-glory. “Among the vices, pride is the first,” says St. Augustine; “from this, proceeds envy; for envy is not the mother of pride, but pride is the mother of envy.” In another place, he explains very beautifully those words of the Wise Man: “The beginning of all sin is pride”; and he says: “Where there is pride, there, also, will be envy. The proud are, of necessity, envious, because envy is the daughter of pride, but pride is a mother which can never be unfruitful, but wherever she is, she brings forth offspring.” An evil tree cannot yield good fruit. We have frequently contemplated the ugly features of pride, let us now see how much the daughter resembles the mother.

2. The objects of envy are also its causes. We would not envy our neighbor if we did not see, or imagine, in him some good quality, in which we ourselves are wanting. Does not the malice of this passion

reveal itself in this? According to the law of charity, our neighbor's good should give us joy; but, in this case, it produces sadness. "We are very unfortunate," says St. Bonaventure, "we are sad on account of our neighbor's goodness; through his improvement, we become worse: he gains in spirit, but we lose; he grows robust, but we become thin; he is healthy, while we grow ill." That which we should praise in him, we contemn; and instead of imitating him, we persecute him. "The Pharisees, therefore, said among themselves: Do you see that we prevail nothing? Behold, the whole world is gone after him." (John 12 : 19.) St. Gregory, commenting on this passage, says: "They were witnesses of the miracles which he did, and should have been converted by them; but, instead, they sought to kill him who, they saw, had power to raise the dead to life again."

II. In other sins, man finds a short, though only an apparent, pleasure; but in envy he finds none, on the contrary,

1. *He torments himself; and*
2. *He will be continually tormented by God.*

1. "He that rejoiceth at another man's ruin, shall not be unpunished," says the Wise Man. (Prov. 17 : 5.) The desire of the Psalmist is fulfilled in the case of the envious man: "Let their sword enter into their own hearts." (Ps. 36 : 15.) Whom does envy injure but the sinner himself? Manifold evils overtake the envious, for that which serves as a consolation to others is a torment to them. "He injures himself most," says St. Basil, "for his heart is devoured by envy, as iron is consumed by rust." And St. Augustine asks the envious man: "Do you not, continually, suffer torture without alleviation, labor without rest, punishment without end, hunger without being satisfied?" "O envious man!" exclaims St. Chrysostom, "thou art full of confusion. For as matter is consumed by the fire, so the envious man is devoured by his hateful passion." It is needless to multiply proofs. Any one that has seen, or felt, the effects of envy readily comprehends my meaning.

2. The just God generally increases the torment of the envious, by increasing, to his confusion, the glory of the one he envies. The patriarch Joseph is an instance of this. His brothers, who were envious of him, from being freemen were made slaves; Joseph, on the contrary, notwithstanding their jealousy, was raised to be next to the king. What injury did the jealousy of Cain procure for Abel? Against his will, Cain translated Abel into the kingdom of heaven, while he himself, became a fugitive upon the face of the earth. In what did the jealousy of Esau injure Jacob? Jacob gained the inheritance, and was blessed,



while Esau was obliged to leave his father's house. "The more you envy a person, so much the more do you exalt him; for God, who sees your envy, will raise up the innocent, for your greater punishment," says St. Chrysostom. And, if the envious man is not wilfully blind, he must acknowledge that he is justly dealt with, and he must exclaim, with the Psalmist: "Lord, thou hast done all things with wisdom." "Why do you think evil in your hearts?" You, who envy others, are your own worst enemies. Has your neighbor greater mental gifts than you have? Is he wealthier, or more respected than yourself? What right have you to complain? All that he has comes, not from himself, but from God. Why do you object to the dispensations of Providence? Is God obliged to render an account to you, miserable sinner, as to his reason for giving such and such gifts to your neighbor, rather than to you? "He hath made us, and not we ourselves." (Ps. 99 : 3.) God himself rebukes the envious, saying: "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will? Is thy eye evil, because I am good?" (Matth. 20 : 15.) Amen.

B.

## EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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GOD'S LOVING BOUNTY AND TENDERNESS TO MAN.

*" They brought to him one sick of the palsy." (Matth. 9.)*

To-day's Gospel records one of the most striking miracles of our Lord Jesus Christ, wrought during his sojourn in Capharnaum, a city of Galilee, whose inhabitants he had taken special pains to convert. A poor man, for many years sorely afflicted with palsy, was brought by his friends to the Saviour, that he might have compassion on him, and heal him. But this poor paralytic was afflicted with another and far greater misery than the palsy. His soul was sick with sin ; and it was his spiritual maladies that Jesus first pitied and relieved. He gently said to him : " Son, be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee " ; and then, having healed his soul, he gave him back the health and strength of his body, and bade him to take up his bed and walk.

Dearly beloved Christians, this miracle is a forcible reminder of the goodness of God to us. His heart is moved with compassion, for all who seek relief from his bounty, for their spiritual and temporal necessities. God's attributes, as you well know, are all as infinite and unfathomable as God himself. He is essentially just, as he is holy, wise, merciful, and good ; yet when we consider God's constant dealings with man, there is no divine attribute or perfection, which calls forth the gratitude and love of the human heart so forcibly as his divine goodness or bounty. Even the beasts of the field are full of gratitude and devoted attachment to those who treat them kindly. Should man, then, with all his glorious powers of reason and intelligence show himself by his ingratitude to God more base and insensible than the brute ? Setting aside all higher and nobler motives, self-interest, alone, demands that we should love that divine Benefactor who has sovereign power to aid us in every difficulty, and render us happy for time and eternity !

Let us, to-day, consider some of the reasons which naturally increase our esteem of God's goodness in our regard, so that we may endeavor to serve and love him better and more faithfully for the future. I will speak to you :

- I. *Of God's goodness to sinners ;*
- II. *Of his goodness to his faithful servants ; and*
- III. *Of his goodness to us in particular.*

I. There is scarcely a page in the Holy Scriptures which does not,

either directly or indirectly, portray this consoling attribute of God. Not to speak of the creation of man, so graphically related in the Book of Genesis ; not to speak, I say, of God's goodness to man in his state of original justice and innocence, I wish to call your attention to the manner in which God has dealt and still deals with man in his fallen state.

1. When Adam and Eve deliberately transgressed the divine command in the terrestrial paradise, God's justice demanded condign punishment for their wilful disobedience and contempt of his supreme authority. The whole human race was doomed, with our first parents, to everlasting punishment. But behold ! the goodness and mercy of God plead in behalf of his sinful creatures, and a Redeemer is promised who will reconcile man to God and atone, by his obedience even unto death, for the disobedience of Adam and Eve ; nay, more ; who by his Blood will merit for mankind the pardon of their sins and the friendship of a just and holy God.

2. The children of Adam soon forgot duty to an all-merciful Father. Following the inclinations of corrupt nature, and giving full sway to their brutal passions, they plunged into innumerable crimes and disorders. The flood of iniquity was at its highest tide, God in his justice could no longer forbear. The deluge was sent upon the world, and all living creatures, except Noah, his family, and the animals of the Ark, were destroyed by the avenging waters. No sooner, however, had the great flood subsided, than God forgot, as it were, the insults and outrages offered him by man in the past, and entered into a covenant with Noah, promising not to destroy the world again by water.

3. God blest Noah and his sons, and said to them: "Increase and multiply, and fill the earth." Children were born to them, and the descendants of Shem, Ham and Japhet soon became very numerous. Soon, too, they forgot the punishment which the former inhabitant of the earth had drawn upon themselves by their evil conduct. Idolatry, infidelity, and crimes of every description were committed without fear or restraint. But God did not again destroy the world. In his goodness, he spared the sinful people : chose to himself a certain race amongst whom the true and only God would be adored ; and when even all of this nation except a single tribe had become unfaithful, he sent his only-begotten Son into the world. The Son of the Eternal Father appears as a poor babe in Bethlehem. He comes to teach true wisdom by poverty and mortification ; to instruct the ignorant, to reclaim the wicked, and to point out the way of salvation to the wanderer in the path of vice. What has not God done for man to convince him of his goodness and love ? What does not God con-

tinue to do to prove that his bounty and mercy are infinite? Look at the world as it has been from the coming of our Lord until the present! People, for the most part, live as if they believed not in the existence of a God, all-wise and just, who is bound to punish the evil-doer and reward the good. Debauchery and lust, intemperance and blasphemy, rebellion against God and his holy Church,—every species of crime seems to be indulged in with impunity. Were we to consult reason alone, we would be forced to say: Why does God permit the world to exist? Why does he not hurl down into everlasting torments the audacious spurners of his holy law? Instead of this, he permits them to live and enjoy health, and many other temporal blessings; success, prosperity and an abundant share of earthly happiness. Faith necessarily must here come to the assistance of reason. Faith exclaims, "God is good, and wills not the death of the sinner but that he be converted and live"; for, as the Royal Prophet has said: "The goodness and mercy of God are above all his attributes!"

II. If we admire the goodness of God towards sinners, what shall we say of that most amiable attribute as manifested to *his faithful servants*? How great is not his solicitude for them, how constant his watchfulness! He aids them in their difficulties and trials, comforts them in their troubles and anxieties, and protects them in dangers and persecutions. Let us open the Holy Scriptures, and, while listening to the wonders of God's mercy and kindness recounted in its sacred pages, we shall become convinced of what St. Paul wrote to the Romans: "To such as love God, all things work together unto good." (Rom. 8:24.)

1. The inhabitants of the unfortunate cities of Sodom and Gomorrah had given themselves over to vices too shameful to mention. But, amidst the total abandonment of virtue and morality one just man was found, Lot, the brother of Abraham. God's justice demanded the destruction of the cities of the plain, but to save Lot, his wife and two daughters, he sent angels to warn them of the impending ruin of the guilty people.

2. The people of Israel, oppressed by the Egyptians, treated like slaves and subjected to the most cruel sufferings by the impious Pharaoh, were not forgotten by a good and loving God. The measure of wickedness being filled, God's avenging arm was stretched out upon Egypt, the effect of his just anger was felt by all the dwellers in that land, except his chosen people. The ten plagues of Egypt were as so many messengers from heaven reminding the descendants of Jacob and Joseph, that God was their protector. When the multitude of insects,

the storms, lightning and hail ruined the fields of their enemies, the land of Gessen remained free from harm. When the first-born of every Egyptian household fell under the touch of the destroying angel, the children of Israel were spared.

3. And then, in the New Law, how great are the fatherly care and tenderness of God for those who truly seek him and serve him ! How loving are the invitations and promises of our dear Redeemer ! "Come to me," he says, "all ye that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you." And again "Why are you solicitous, saying, what shall we eat or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed ? your Father who is in heaven knoweth that you have need of all these things."—"Ask and it shall be given to you." "My Father loveth you."

4. But more especially does God watch over his own in times of persecution and danger. Abraham, in a foreign land, amongst a people who knew not the true God, was, as it were, led by the hand of God, and saved from the evils that threatened him amongst those idolatrous strangers. Jacob, in his flight to escape the anger of his brother Esau ; Joseph being sold by his brothers as a slave ; Moses before king Pharaoh ; Tobias in captivity ; Susannah in the hands of the impious judges, Daniel in the lion's den—are all so many striking examples of the goodness of God to those who serve him. Adam our first parent, David, king of Juda, Manasses, in the power of his enemies, Peter the Apostle, and Magdalene the public sinner, stand and will stand forever in sacred history, as examples for us of God's goodness towards those who have erred, but who in sincerity of heart repent of their sins, and return to the paths of virtue.

III. Yet what need is there of Scriptural proof for all this ? Our own existence, our individual being and life speak louder than examples. Each one of us may say in humble fear and gratitude : Why does God permit me to live after so many wilful insults offered to his divine majesty ? Why does he still leave me the power of my reason and senses, since I have so often used those gifts to offend him ? The world around me, all animate and inanimate creation, never ceases to speak to me of God's bounty and goodness to man ; and yet, alas ! how few are they who seriously reflect upon it ! We believe it, we acknowledge it, dear Christians ; yes, we say, that it is because of the goodness of God, that we are not long since burning in the flames of hell ; and still we love him not. Perhaps this very moment sin burdens our conscience, and we feel that, but for the goodness of God, we would be hurled into everlasting torments.



“Too late have I known thee, O eternal Truth ! Too late have I loved thee, O eternal Beauty !” exclaimed the great and learned doctor of the Church, St. Augustine. This holy father never ceased to thank God’s goodness for having so mercifully spared him. Looking back upon the years he had spent in forgetfulness of God and in the pursuit of the empty pleasures of this world, he was filled with confusion and shame. Deeply grieved at the thought of his ingratitude towards so good and merciful a Father, he resolved to give his whole heart to him, and to spend the remainder of his life in his service. We also, my brethren, on this day, with a like shame and confusion at the view of our past sinful lives, should rise from our lethargy and say : “To-day, O good and merciful God, I understand for the first time, thy infinite bounty in my regard ! Henceforth, with the help of thy holy grace, I will remember how good thou art, and, with grateful heart will meditate on thy goodness towards me the least deserving of thy creatures !” With St. Ignatius, we should exclaim : “To thee, I give all I have ; my understanding and my will ; for they are thy gifts !” In difficulties and trials, in adversity as well as in prosperity, we must cry out with the Saints : My good and merciful Father who is in heaven, the God who loves me, will lead me safely through the thorny path of life, to the place of eternal rest which, in his kind Providence, he has prepared for his faithful servants. May God grant this blessing to us all, through Jesus Christ our loving Redeemer, and through the intercession of the Immaculate Mother Mary ! Amen.

REV. L. B.

## NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## INTEMPERANCE IN EATING AND DRINKING.

*"I have prepared my dinner; my beeves and fatlings are killed and all things are ready; come ye to the wedding."* (Matt. 22 : 4.)

Under this similitude of a wedding, the holy Fathers and sacred writers, at one time, understand the union of the divine and human natures in Christ; at another, the union of Christ with his Church; or, again, the union of the soul with God. Having a choice as to which of these interpretations shall form the matter of our meditation to-day,—I shall adopt the last-named as most useful for our purpose. I have already spoken, it is true, of the moral union of the soul with God; and we all know the manner and the delight of this union; but I desire now to indicate to you the greatest obstacle which the Christian can place to that union; and this I take to be—*Intemperance*. "He who adheres to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6 : 17) and what is there that, in the highest degree, prevents the spirit from adhering to God, but Intemperance? An intemperate man is incapable of uniting himself with God because, by his gross sensuality, he withdraws

I. *From God*; and

II. *From his better self*.

If you will grant me your attention for a while,—I shall endeavor to hold up to you this vice in its true light, and excite within you a lively hatred of it.

I. The intemperate man

1. *Loses all zeal for God's service*; and

2. *Makes a God of his belly*.

1. The drunkard or the glutton getting out of bed in the morning, far from asking himself the first thing: "How shall I serve God to-day?"—on the contrary, exclaims in act, if not in word: "How can I best serve my stomach?" "Destroy not the work of God for meat," says the Apostle. (Rom. 14 : 20.) "Woe to you," threatens the prophet, "that rise up early in the morning, to follow drunkenness, and to drink till the evening to be inflamed with wine. The harp and the lyre, and the timbrel and the pipe, and wine are in your feasts,

*and the work of the Lord you regard not.*" (Isaias 5 : 11, 12.) "No one who is addicted to drunkenness, has any desire for the word of God," says St. Chrysostom. For this reason, too, St. Augustine declares emphatically: "O, how many are there amongst you who would sooner go to the ale-house than to church; who prefer refreshing the body rather than the soul; who serve the devil rather than God!"

2. These are they "whose God," as St. Paul expresses it, "is their belly." (Phil. 3, 19.) The nature of man is two-fold, that of soul and body. The body must be subject to the soul, and the soul to God. The intemperate man is a direct contradiction to all this. He never thinks of God; he subjects his soul to his body; and his body is, as it were, his main object, his idol, his God. "He sits down to eat and drink"; (Exod. 32 : 6) everything that appears good to his animal cravings, to his sensual appetite, is done. Tertullian thus depicts an intemperate man in glowing colors: "His God is his belly, his lungs are his temple; his corpulency the altar; his priest is the cook that ministers to his appetite, his holy spirit is the flavor of a roast, his divine gifts are the spices and condiments he uses, his faith receives its warmth from the kitchen, his hopes are all centred in the quantity and quality of victuals set before him." My brethren, how do you like this gross, humiliating picture of a man who is devoted to the gratification of his appetite?

## II. The intemperate man

1. *Deprives himself of reason, the highest attribute of humanity; and*
2. *Degrades himself below the level of the brute.*

1. We know, from the study of medicine, that an excess in eating and drinking produces a most damaging effect upon the senses. As a cloud darkens the rays of the sun, so the fumes of intemperance cloud the intellect of a clear-headed man. "Wisdom and intemperance are contradictory things," says St. Jerome, "for the vapors of drink go to the brain, and darken the intellect, so that one cannot distinguish the true from the false." "Wine and drunkenness take away the understanding." (Osee. 4 : 11.) What shameful results of this vice do we not often see in inebriates! "Noe began to till the ground and planted a vineyard, and drinking of the wine, he was made drunk and he lay down in his tent." (Gen. 9 : 20.) "He had seen the essence of the wine," says St. Ambrose, "but he knew not its strength; and thus, the wine ruined even its inventor." The heathen sages knew this truth well, by the light of reason alone. "Oh! what will not a drunken man do," asks Seneca; certainly many things which, in his sober moments, he would be ashamed of!

2. When a man voluntarily deprives himself of his reason, he makes himself like the irrational animal. This the psalmist confirms, saying : " Man, when he was in honor, did not understand ; he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them." (Ps. 48 : 13.) Nay, more ; I may affirm with St. Chrysostom, that the intemperate act much more irrationally than do the beasts of the field. Animals only drink when thirsty ; they regulate their appetite by necessity ; but the intemperate man oversteps the limits of appetite. He is scarcely more rational when he is sober, than when in a beastly state of intoxication. Behold, for example, the rich glutton mentioned in the Gospel, and hear him saying to himself : " My soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thy rest, eat, drink, make good cheer." (Luke 12 : 19.) Would it be possible for an animal to think or act more irrationally ? To speak in general terms, the intemperate usually live like animals ; they eat and drink when, what, how, and where it pleases them ; they live according to the senses, not according to reason.

If we desire to espouse our soul to Christ, we must fly all intemperance as the greatest obstacle to this union. We should not live to eat, but eat simply in order to live. " I beseech of thee, O, my God ! " exclaims St. Ambrose, " give me the grace to go to the table as a sick man to his medicine, that I may take no delight in my food, regarding it merely as a necessity." For just as medicine is not taken by the sick for pleasure but from necessity, and not without fear that it may perhaps do them more harm than good, so in taking our food or drink to sustain life, we should take it, at the same time, with Christian fear, lest the natural satisfaction it excites in us should (if immoderate) prove dangerous to the health of our immortal soul. " Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life " ; and endeavor to imitate the example of holy Job, who said, " Before I eat, I sigh." (John 3 : 24.) He sighed, he was afraid, " because he feared to offend God," by the indulgence of his appetites. Happy the Christian who partakes of his food with a like self-distrust and purity of intention ! Our Lord will give him to eat of that meat whereof he spoke to his disciples when they pressed him to eat by Jacob's well : " I have food to eat which you know not of." (John 4 : 22.) Amen. B.

## NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE CAUSE OF THE SMALL NUMBER OF THE ELECT.

*"Many are called, few are chosen."* (Matth. 22 : 14.)

In the Gospel of this day, we read of a king who made a marriage-feast for his son. He sent his servants to call them that were invited, but they declined the invitation. He sent other servants, saying to them : "Go ye into the highways and as many as you shall find, invite them to the wedding." And his servants went and gathered together all that they found, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. And the king went to see his guests and he saw there a man who had not a wedding garment. And he said to him : "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? But he was silent. Then the king said to the waiters : Bind his hands and feet and cast him into exterior darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Considering these details more closely, we will find:

- I. *That they typify the particular judgment of every human soul ; and*
- II. *That while many are called to save their souls, few correspond to the grace of that divine call.*

I. *The king went in to see his guests.*

1. "It is appointed for all men once to die and, after that, judgment." Every soul will be judged immediately after death. The condemnation of the rich glutton, who died, and was buried in hell, and the happy end of poor Lazarus, who, at the hour of death, was immediately translated into Abraham's bosom, clearly prove the existence of a particular judgment. Otherwise, where would the good and the bad be till the day of general judgment? Most certainly divine justice requires that the wicked should be punished and the good rewarded immediately after their departure from this life, for the Scripture says : "He shall render to every one according to his works." Why should he not judge every one immediately after death? That he will do so, is evident from the words : "It is appointed for all men once to die, and after that, judgment," since thereby the sacred Text assuredly does not mean the general judgment. But some may urge : If every soul is judged im-



mediately after death, there is then no necessity for a general judgment ; and yet we read that Christ will come in the clouds at the last day, with great power and majesty, to judge the living and the dead. There will be, indeed, a general judgment. Such a judgment is necessary, first, to *justify before all men* the wisdom of God's providence, which in this life has often granted riches and prosperity to the wicked, whilst it has visited the just with adversity and affliction. *Secondly*, to *separate the good from the bad*, to reward the one and condemn the other, publicly, in the presence of all mankind. A general judgment, moreover, is absolutely necessary to the end that the bodies of the just and the wicked may alike receive their sentence, and that every one may be recompensed according to the things which he has done in the flesh, whether good or evil. The particular judgment concerns only the souls of men ; their bodies being in the grave. But at the general judgment the body must partake either of the soul's eternal glory or of its eternal punishment, having been to it, in this life, an instrument of either its virtues or its vices.

2. *The king saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment.*—The wedding garment is the robe of innocence which we receive at baptism. It is our duty to preserve it unspotted.—To admonish you of this obligation, the priest after he had baptized you, clothed you with a white garment, saying at the same time : “ Receive this white garment and see thou carry it without stain before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ, that thou mayest have eternal life. Meditate frequently on these words, and consider what will befall you at the bar of Christ, if you defile your garment of innocence by a life of sin. This white garment will condemn you on the Last Day ; and the priest who baptized you, will rise up against you, and demand God's vengeance upon you for abusing the grace of your baptism.

How many are there, perhaps, among us, who have defiled the robe of innocence which we have received at the baptismal font ! How many here are, perhaps, in the state of mortal sin ! If they were summoned this moment before the judgment seat of God, would he not find them divested of a wedding garment ? Ah, there are few who preserve unspotted the robe of baptismal innocence, and yet, we know that nothing defiled can enter heaven. Tell me where I may find an adult Christian who has never been guilty of a mortal sin in thought word, or deed ! Show me one man or woman who constantly lives up to the maxims of the Gospel, and the rules of Christianity ? Ah ! their number is small ! But, on the other hand, how many, alas ! live in open violation of the laws of God and of his Church ! How many by their immoralities dishonor the sacred character they bear, and perpetrate those odious and shameful crimes, which, as the Apostle says,

should not be even named among Christians, and which exclude forever from the kingdom of heaven !

But, suppose you have lost the grace of your baptism, is there no remedy ? Yes, a second baptism remains—the baptism of penance, and were it not for the Sacrament of Penance, almost all of us would be lost forever. O what thanks we owe to our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, for the institution of this holy Sacrament wherein we may recover the grace of adoption, after having lost it by sin. Have recourse to it with confidence ; your heavenly Father ardently wishes to restore you to his friendship ; for he will not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live. Do not neglect it as the people mentioned in this day's Gospel neglected the invitation to the wedding-feast, going their way, one to his farm, another to his wife, a third to his merchandise. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all other things shall be added unto you." Cleanse your souls from every stain of sin ; remove from it the filthy scum and the old withered skin of iniquity ; wash it clean with fervent tears of penance. Only those who have preserved unspotted the robe of innocence, or those who after having defiled it by sin, have washed it clean again in the blood of the Lamb, can stand before the Judge of the living and the dead. All others shall be cast out into exterior darkness, for he will say to them : "I know not whence you are. Depart from me, you workers of iniquity."

3. *Friend, how comest thou hither not having on a wedding garment ? And he was silent.* This is a picture of the terror and confusion which shall come upon the sinner, when he shall be questioned at last by the supreme Judge : "Friend, how camest thou hither not having on a wedding garment ? Give account of thy stewardship. How hast thou spent thy time, what use hast thou made of the many graces I have bestowed upon thee ? What good have you omitted, what evil have you done ? Ah ! then, you will be silent, like the unfortunate man mentioned in the Gospel ; you will be silent, for the time of deception, of vain excuses, and apologies will be over forever. At present, in the sacred tribunal of Penance, you may blindfold the priest by apologies, but you cannot blindfold the supreme Judge before whose all-seeing eyes all things are naked and open, who judges not only the deed, but the intention.

4. Then the king said to the waiters: *Bind his hands and feet and cast him into exterior darkness ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* Why this terrible sentence ? Is this unfortunate man accused of having ill-treated any of the guests, or of having otherwise conducted himself improperly in the banquet hall ? No ; he is charged only with

having come to the marriage-feast without a wedding garment. This is his sole crime; and yet because of it, he is cast out by the waiters into exterior darkness. God will treat in like manner every one who comes to the eternal banquet with a conscience defiled by sin. The ministers of God, the Angels, will separate the wicked from those happy ones who enjoy endless bliss in the banquet-room of heaven; and the former, understanding at last their great loss, will bitterly lament their folly; and, full of despair, will shed hot tears of an ever-fruitless repentance.

II. 1. The Gospel of this day speaks of only one unfortunate guest who had not on a wedding garment. This man, however, represents all sinners, who are liable at any moment to be excluded from the banquet-hall of eternal glory, and precipitated into the prison-house of hell, where there shall be everlasting weeping and gnashing of teeth. That this will be the fate of many is evident from the words of Christ; for, he concluded the parable with these words: "*Many are called, few are chosen.*" Words of great and solemn import! twice we read them in holy Writ, and we know that they mean: All are called to be saved, but few are so happy as to be saved. It is the will of God that all men, without exception, be saved; for he desires not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live. He supplies all men with the necessary and sufficient means to attain the happy end of their creation. Is it not heresy and blasphemy to assert that some men are predestined from eternity to be saved, and others to be damned? God wills all men to come to the knowledge of truth. Nevertheless, it is not to be doubted, that the greater part of mankind are lost forever. Christ himself declares that many are called, but few are chosen. *How so?*

2. *Because the greater part of mankind do not co-operate with the grace of God.* They do not wish to be saved, for if they did, methinks, they would do something to be saved. Instead of that they do every thing to be damned. As every one must work for his daily bread, so we must daily work out our salvation. "God," says St. Augustine, "has created us without our assistance, but he will not save us without our co-operation." If we should be of the number of the many who are lost, it will be our own fault, not God's.

3. There are many who, trusting in their own false wisdom rather than the word of God, make themselves judges of their Judge, saying: "Why is it then that God has created men, if he foresaw that they would be condemned?" To such, I say: You must renounce Christianity if you will only admit what you can comprehend. If you believe

only in a God whose thoughts are as your thoughts, you make yourself equal to God. There are many who explain away the Christian truth to suit the demands of their own poor, feeble intellect. But the wisdom of the world is folly before God. Christ says: "Many are called, but few are chosen." It is true, God has not created you that he might condemn you; neither has he created you that you should offend him by sin. He has made you his creature, to love and serve him, but if you refuse to do either, although he has created you for eternal happiness, you cannot complain if he condemns you. Moreover, God having created man according to his image and likeness, gave him a free will, the highest gift of a rational creature. Without free will, no one can merit heaven; but, being endowed with that noble faculty, we are necessarily endowed also with the power to use it for our eternal salvation or our eternal ruin. The punishment of hell is the deliberate choice of man's perverse will; and God is glorified by the souls in hell as well as by the Saints in heaven; he manifests his mercy in the elect, and his justice in the condemned.

4. Since few do the will of God and live according to their belief, only a few are saved. Look at the great mass of Christians, and you will be convinced that but few, comparatively speaking, enter into heaven either by the gate of innocence or the gate of penance. They were freed in baptism from the slavery of the devil in which they had the misfortune to be born, but they do not scruple to enlist again under his banners; their lives are a direct contradiction to their professed religious principles. And, yet, they pretend that they love God! What proof do they offer of their love? Does not their conduct give the direct lie to their words? Surely, the love of God does not consist in empty protestations, it is not merely lip-service, but, rather, a wonderful fire enkindled in the heart, and animating the whole being. "He that loveth me," says our divine Lord, "keepeth my commandments." If we keep that holy law, we are of the small number of the elect. We are clothed with the nuptial garment of grace—for the Scripture says: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." A mere abstract and speculative faith will not save us. If the gift of faith (precious treasure though it be) is unaccompanied by good works, it is not sufficient for salvation. It will avail us but little on the last day, if our lives have contradicted our profession. Instead of saving us, our faith will be the rule of our condemnation. Therefore, my beloved, believe well, but live well, also. You certainly desire to be saved; but, to that end, you must do the will of God, and the will of God is contained in the commandments. "If thou wilt enter into life," says Christ, "keep the commandments!"

A. W., O. S. B.

## TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## SLOTH.

*"He was at the point of death."* (John 4 : 47.)

To-day, my brethren, we must devote ourselves to discerning the difference between laziness and sloth. Laziness is bodily idleness; sloth is more specially that condition of the soul which begets a disgust for all divine and spiritual matters. My sermon, this morning, will be confined to the latter vice; and the son of the ruler mentioned in to-day's Gospel will afford me an excellent exemplification of this subject in hand. The holy Evangelist tells us two things of the young man: first, that he lay sick at Capharnaum; and second, that he was at the point of death. Those two facts furnish me with the two points of my discourse; for I affirm that sloth is

I. *A dangerous, and*

II. *A deadly disease of the soul.*

I. We must observe that sloth is

1. *A disease of the soul; and*

2. *That it is a dangerous disease.*

1. The life of the soul comes from him who has said: "I am the life." (John 14 : 16.) The further the soul withdraws from God, the nearer it is to death. What the breath is to the body, love and zeal in God's service are to the soul. If the soul is dry within us, as the psalmist says, "my soul is as earth without water unto thee," (Ps. 142 : 6,) it is a sign that it is sick, and in danger of losing its vitality. The Apostle demands of us that we should be "not slothful in solicitude, but fervent in spirit." (Rom. 12 : 11.) He wishes that "we serve God not with sadness or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. 9 : 7.) "Labor the more," says St. Peter, "that by good works you may make sure your vocation and election." (2 Peter 1 : 10.) But when the soul does not perceive within it this activity of spirit, when it is negligent in the discharge of its duties, when it has a distaste for approaching frequently to the holy Sacraments, and an abhorrence for the practice of penance,—it is a sure sign that it has withdrawn from God and is sick.

2. This sickness is dangerous. For, as in bodily illness, lethargy is considered by medical practitioners a very grave symptom, so this



moral torpor, or *coma*, is looked upon by spiritual physicians with a serious concern and suspicion. Daily experience convinces them that it is much easier to convert a fiery, impetuous sinner, than it is to give to slothful souls renewed fervor of spirit. "I would thou wert cold or hot; but because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold, nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth." (Apoc. 3 : 15.) The Sacred Text immediately gives the reason for this strange and overpowering aversion on the part of God, saying : "Because thou sayest I am rich, and made wealthy, and I have need of nothing; and thou knowest not, that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (that is, in spirit). (Apoc. 3 : 16.) A great sinner sees and recognizes his own unhappy state. A profound and touching sermon may suddenly move him to repentance, an impressive exhortation may melt his passionate heart. But a slothful, lukewarm man feels nothing. He may be still, it is true, a friend of God,—his negligence and tepidity may not extend to the length of mortal sin,—but he is like him, of whom our Saviour once said, "Lazarus our friend sleepeth." (John 11 : 11.) A sound sleeper lies unconscious of all around him, yea, even of the sufferings and needs of his nearest and dearest friends; so the slothful soul slumbers on, insensible to its eternal interests, to the honor and glory of God, its best Friend and dearest Benefactor. O, what a dangerous condition!

II. It may truthfully be remarked of the victim of sloth that

1. *He is "at the point of death";* and,
2. *There is no remedy to deliver him from eternal death.*

1. "Desires kill the slothful, for his hands have refused to work at all." (Prov. 21 : 25.) A slothful man sometimes makes good resolutions; but alas! when it comes to putting them into execution, he says : "There is a lion without; I shall be slain in the midst of the streets." (Prov. 22 : 13.) I would rather stay at home in bed; or my sickness is not fatal. In the end, the fate of such a man resembles that of the general Sisara, spoken of in the Book of Judges, who, "passing from deep sleep to death, fainted away and died." (Judges 4 : 21.) It can no longer be said, he is at the point of death, but is already dead; for if one perseveres for a long time in a state of sloth and tepidity and neglects his necessary duties, his tepidity becomes a mortal sin; and though he may not have committed murder or adultery or any other public crime, it suffices that he has done no good, that he has neglected all his Christian obligations; and hence, his soul is dead,—having expired because of the extinction of the vivifying grace of God. O how many are thus dead who think themselves still alive! It was in this condition that the unhappy bishop found

himself to whom God said, "I know thy works, that thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead." (Apoc. 3 : 1.)

2. Now, if a man perseveres in this living death, so to speak, there remains no remedy by which he can be saved from real and everlasting death, if God does not take pity on him, and work as great a miracle in his behalf as that which to-day's Gospel records of the son of the ruler. He no longer exclaims : "Unhappy man that I am ; who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?" (Rom. 7 : 24.) For his blindness prevents his realizing his own condition, his dangerous state. Corporal death deprives the eyes of their sight, and moral death extinguishes the light of reason ; so that the slothful man is already of the number of those unfortunate beings who, like the idols of the Gentiles, "have eyes, and see not." (Ps. 113 : 13.) He who lives in habitual sin resembles a corpse decomposing in a grave. One may say of him what the disciples said of Lazarus : "Lord, by this time, he stinketh, for he is now of four days." (John 11 : 39.) A horrible odor of decay arises from that guilty soul, and "it is the odor of death unto death." (2 Cor. 2 : 16.) The eye of man may fail to discover in such a person open, mortal sins, yet he is, nevertheless, in the sight of God and his angels, a whitened sepulchre which conceals in its depths a vicious, putrefied soul.

Alas ! my God ! we now perceive the deadly nature of this sin ; but are there not some amongst us infected with it, who know not that they are sick ? Lord, thou hast said : "They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are sick." (Matt. 9 : 12.) O Sovereign Physician of our souls, make haste to help us ! The conversion of a slothful sinner is the work of thy hands, a miracle is necessary to accomplish it. "For no man can do these miracles which thou doest." (John 3 : 2.) Thou hast loved man so much that thou hast, through love, offered up thy life for him and now : "Behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." (John 11 : 3.) He is really in danger, "he is at the point of death," and he cannot be restored to health without a miracle. O, sweet Jesus, do thou work this miracle ! Say to us what thou hast once said to Martha and Mary about the sickness of Lazarus, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it." (John 11 : 4.) And you, O, sinner ! make way for the entrance of this divine Physician into your slothful heart, and exclaim with the Psalmist,— "O Lord, heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee !" (Ps. 40 : 5.) Amen. B.

## TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## THE CAUSES OF PREMATURE DEATH.

*“ There was a certain ruler whose son was sick at Capharnaum.”*  
 (John 4 : 46.)

The son of a certain ruler, or a royal officer, is very sick ; and the father, fearing he may die, requests Jesus to come down and heal him. This is an especially sad case, because of the youth of the sick person. Who is not afflicted when he hears that a young man or young woman, a promising son or good daughter, the support of father and mother, has been snatched away in the early bloom of life ? And yet, how often does inexorable and cruel death destroy the young ! Deploable as may be such premature deaths, how much worse is it when young people die of diseases contracted through their own fault. Such people are, as it were, suicides ; and that they load their consciences with a heavy weight of guilt is evident, and needs no explanation from me. In order to warn you, especially the young, against this crime, I will demonstrate to you, to-day, that, the majority of premature deaths are caused :

- I. *By intemperance in eating and drinking ;*
- II. *By excessive fondness for amusements ; and*
- III. *By covetousness.*

I. You sometimes hear people say, that the hour of each man's death is appointed by God. But this is not so. True, the Apostle says : “ It is appointed for man once to die ” (Heb. 9 : 27) ; but he does not say that *the hour* is appointed, in which he shall die. According to these words, man cannot entirely avert death ; but he can keep it at a distance for a longer time. He can prolong his life by a frugal and sober life, just as easily as he can accelerate the hour of his death, and shorten his life, by a dissipated and licentious life. How many are there who with simple diet, and abstinence from all excess, have attained the great age of eighty, ninety, or a hundred years ? The holy hermit Paul had nothing for his nourishment but bread (which, as the legend says, a raven brought him daily), and fresh water from a neighboring spring, and yet he lived to extreme old age. St. Romuald fasted all the days of his life, and yet he numbered one hundred and twenty years when he died. These are examples that clearly prove that man can prolong his life by temperance in eating and drinking. An experienced physician once said : “ I have practised medicine for more than

sixty years, and I have never yet seen a man of ordinary health who lived frugally, abstemiously, die prematurely." Feasting, not fasting, engenders disease. In Italy, they have two proverbs: "He that wishes to eat long let him eat little"; and: "The food you leave at eating (on your plate), will profit you more than that which you have eaten." And the Sacred Scripture says: "By surfeiting many have perished: but he that is temperate, shall prolong his life." (Ecclus. 37: 34.)

2. As temperance and abstemiousness are conducive to a long life, so intemperance, drunkenness, and carousing are most injurious to health and life; drunkenness kills more men, than the sword. "In many meats there will be sickness; and by surfeiting many have perished." (Ecclus. 37: 33, 34.) You have all known young men who contracted sicknesses by intemperance; and sank, in consequence, into an early grave. There are such in every locality. It was reported, some time ago, that in England, within the space of ten years, forty-nine hundred and twenty-two men died of *mania-a-potu*; and besides these, thirty-two hundred and thirty-eight on account of intemperance. Now, tell me, dearly beloved, were not these eighty-one hundred and sixty people all suicides?

3. Some one may say: I have known such and such a man who has been addicted to drink from his earliest youth; and yet, he has managed to live to the age of sixty or seventy years. His vice, then, has not wrought *him* any injury or damage? Think you, my friend, that it has really caused him no damage? Not to speak of the many mortal sins which drunkards commit, is not their health also undermined before its time? Is not the strength of their body weakened, destroyed? Do they not, for years, drag along a miserable, nervous existence, unfit for work or well-doing? And if, in spite of their wicked drunken life, they reach their sixtieth year, would they not, by a sober and temperate career, have reached, perhaps, their four-score? Even granted that they have not shortened their life by twenty years, how is it with the health and life of their children? Experience teaches, and every physician confirms it, that drunkards beget unhealthy children, who sooner or later die of consumption or epilepsy. If, then, they are not murderers, do not their children and their children's children inherit the germ of a premature death? But on the tombstones of most drunkards might be inscribed the words; "*Here lies one who shortened his life by his own excesses.*" And what becomes of the immortal souls of such self-destroyers? I shall not speak of that, but only pray God that every one of you may guard against a vice which yearly delivers thousands upon thousands to an early death and a dishonorable grave.

II. The second cause of premature death is *excessive fondness for amusements*.

1. Some reasonable recreation is necessary for every man, for the preservation of his health and the cheerful endurance of the many labors, cares, and tribulations of life. Hence the Sacred Scripture does not forbid us some lawful pleasures, but expressly tells us to rejoice. "Rejoice always," says St Paul. We must, however, carefully distinguish between Christian enjoyments and mere worldly pleasures. The latter are absolutely forbidden if they be sinful in themselves, or proximately conducive to sin. Furthermore, we must avoid all excess even in licit amusements, if we would not prejudice our health or life.

2. How frequently do we not hear of disorderly conduct at parties and festivities! From early in the day till late at night,—yes, till after three or four o'clock in the morning,—nothing but drinking and carousing, so that the miserable merry-makers are sick for the rest of the week thereafter! And will you tell me that such rioting and reveling does not sooner or later undermine one's health? Does it not destroy, instead of strengthening, all vital power? Does it not almost invariably lead to sickness and premature death? Temperate enjoyments strengthen the body; but: "In many meats there will be sickness; and greediness will turn to choler. By surfeiting many have perished." (Ecclus. 37: 33–34.) Whence comes gout? Whence headache? Whence other diseases without number? From intemperance in eating and drinking? Gluttons and high-livers (who, like Dives, feast sumptuously every day) are nothing less than suicides.

3. Another dangerous amusement, too often indulged in to excess, is dancing. St. Paul says of the idolators of the Old Law: "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to joy" (to dance). (1 Cor. 10: 7.) If the Apostle were now alive, he might say the same of the people to-day; for, where is there a festivity at which they do not dance? "Dances of themselves" (says St Francis of Sales) "are indifferent things, but they become dangerous in their use or abuse." Not only are balls and dancing-parties very dangerous to the health of the soul but, also, to the health and life of the body. Over-exertion in dancing, over-heating one's self and then suddenly cooling off, can not help but prove very injurious to health; and is often the cause of death. Are not those young people suicides, who shorten their lives by such folly and excess? O Christian parents, look to it well that your children do not indulge in such enjoyments, especially when they are too much prolonged. No one has ever yet gained anything by dancing; but many have thereby lost innocence, bodily health and life, and (worse than all) the eternal salvation of their souls!



III. The third cause of premature death is : *Covetousness*. Now you may ask, can people shorten their lives by avarice ? And yet my assertion is true. There are people, and their number is not small, who labor day and night, in order to amass riches. They allow themselves no rest, no recreation. If they have finished a work, which claimed all their strength, they at once commence another. They eagerly reckon their gains. They urge their exhausted bodies and brains to the extreme of exertion in the hope of becoming millionaires, or capitalists. And what is the result ? Their strength deserts them. Continual hard and fatiguing labor weakens the body ; and they succumb to their labors, and die a premature death. If they had but granted themselves a little rest and recreation ; if they had but taken the necessary nourishment or medicine, their bodies might have been invigorated, and their strength preserved for future labors. But no, their avarice is so great that they are willing to sacrifice to their idol—money—not only their own health and strength but the health and strength of their children, if by their sale of the necessities of life they can increase their wealth and accumulate riches.

Diligence and application are really noble and honorable virtues ; no less is to be praised a prudent economy, as opposed to wilful waste—but to work without the necessary recreation, by excessive toil and over-exertion to ruin health and life, and for no other purpose than that of hoarding up riches, is suicide. Economy is a beautiful virtue, to be commended by all, but to deprive one's self of the necessary food and nourishment : and again for the sole purpose of heaping up riches, this, I say, again, is nothing more or less than self-destruction. We are not masters of our lives. God is the Supreme Ruler of life and death. Hence, we are not permitted to do anything that might injure health or shorten the term of our natural life. “Do thyself no harm,” says the Wise Man ; and if we carefully avoid intemperance in eating and drinking, excess in lawful pleasures, and the covetous, grudging spirit of the miser, we may reasonably hope, God willing, that our days “may be long in the land” which the Lord our God giveth to us. Amen.

J. F.

## TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## THE ROSARY AND THE HOLY MASS.

*Do this for a commemoration of me."* (Luke 22 : 19.)

To-day, we celebrate the feast of the Holy Rosary ; and the honor of our dear mother Mary, as well as the importance of that great and most popular of all devotions, demands that I should make it now the subject of our meditation. The Rosary, as a truly Catholic prayer, is suitable to all times and places, and to all classes of people—old and young, high and lowly, ignorant and enlightened. It is adapted to all our wants. It may be recited in joy or sorrow—as a prayer of petition, or an offering of thanksgiving. But, to-day, it is my intention to show you how appropriate it is to recite the Rosary, whilst assisting at that holiest and most sublime sacrifice, the sun and centre of all Catholic worship.—the holy Mass. And this is because the Rosary is so well adapted

I. *To the essence*, and

II. *To the purpose*, of the holy Mass.

I. What is holy Mass? What takes place therein? In the Sacrifice of the Mass, by the hands of the priest, Jesus Christ offers himself,—his body and blood under the appearances of bread and wine—to his eternal Father.

The Mass is the unbloody renewal of the Sacrifice of Mount Calvary. On the cross, our Lord offered himself to his Father in a bloody manner ; he shed his blood, and died for us. He took our sins upon himself, and atoned for them. We had lost our glorious prerogative of a blissful immortality, our title to life everlasting,—he restored this to us by the sacrifice of his own life. By our disobedience, we had dishonored God ; but our Redeemer made full reparation to the insulted majesty of the God-head by his obedience, even unto the death of the cross. This perfect satisfaction offered to God for the sins of men, freed them from the punishment which his justice demanded, and opened the gates of heaven to the human race. This was the bloody sacrifice on the cross.

Now, what Jesus did in dying on the cross, he does in holy Mass, but in an unbloody manner, that is, he offers himself, his body and his blood to his heavenly Father, but he does not die, as he did then on the cross. The same body, however, which was slain on the cross, (but now lives gloriously in heaven), the same blood which was shed

on the cross, becomes present on the altar in the holy Consecration, and is offered to God by Christ in the person of the priest, for the living and the dead. The Father looks with infinite complacency upon this sacrifice, its Victim being his only begotten Son ; and through his obedience he is pacified, and reconciled with us, his sinful and rebellious creatures. He accepts the ransom of Christ's Precious Blood, and through its saving merits, grants us all graces and blessings, and receives us into his eternal kingdom. In every holy Mass, the sacrifice of Mount Calvary, the Passion and death of our Lord and Redeemer is renewed before our eyes, though we be not able to perceive it with our senses. Hence, when Jesus celebrated the first Mass, he said to his Apostles : " Do this for a commemoration of me." (Luke 22 : 19.) St. Paul, also, writes : " As often as you shall eat this bread, (the body of the Lord) and drink this chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord, until he come." (1 Cor. 11 : 26.)

On this account, all those prayers which remind us of the Passion and death of Christ, are suitable for those who assist at the holy Mass ; and to these belong the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary. In those five Mysteries, the whole Passion of Christ is represented,—from his Agony in the Garden of Olives to his last sigh on the Cross. While we recite it devoutly, we see our Lord bathed in his bloody sweat in the Garden ; and afterwards shedding his blood in torrents beneath the cruel scourges. We see the crown of thorns pressed upon his head ; we follow, with Mary, in his footsteps as he carries his cross to Mount Calvary, and finally, we stand in spirit beneath that cross, and see him expire thereon, in the most terrible torments.

As Jesus Christ himself in the holy Mass offers his body and blood, by the hands of the priest, to his heavenly Father, and, as it were, represents his Passion to him that he may pardon sinners, so, in the Rosary, we, also, represent the Passion of his Son to God, and ask him to be gracious and merciful to us for the sake of Jesus, who sweated blood for us, who was scourged and crowned with thorns for us, who carried his cross for us, and who was crucified for us. Thus, the sorrowful Rosary corresponds to the essence of the holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

But the Joyful and Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary may, also, be made use of during Mass. That Holy Sacrifice is the most sublime act of worship a creature can offer to Almighty God. It is our chief means of rendering him due homage and obtaining for ourselves all graces,—hence, feelings of joy and exultation must naturally arise in our hearts whilst assisting thereat. On this account, it is very proper to reflect during Mass upon either the Joyous or the Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary, which commemorate the Incarnation and birth of our Lord, his sojourn upon earth, his Resurrection and Ascension into

Heaven. In the Mass, the *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, "Glory to God in the highest," is either chanted or recited, in order to remind us of the Nativity of our Saviour. The Gospel calls to our mind his public life, when he went about preaching the kingdom of God. As he has suffered, and died for our salvation, so he was born on earth, led his humble and hidden life, taught his sacred doctrine, and rose from the dead, all for our salvation. The Sacrifice of the Mass reminds us of all that Jesus suffered for us; but it also reminds of all those ineffably great and glorious Mysteries by which our redemption was accomplished. And as the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary bring before us the Annunciation, the Incarnation, the Nativity, and hidden life of Jesus, so the Glorious Mysteries portray his Resurrection, and Ascension into heaven, the Descent of the Holy Ghost, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Paradise, and her Coronation by her Son as Queen of Angels and of men.

II. But the Rosary is, also, well adapted to the end or purpose of the Holy Mass. What is to be accomplished by the Holy Mass? For what object has it been instituted? To give glory to God, for it is:

1. *A sacrifice of praise, and*
2. *A sacrifice of thanksgiving.*

1. We are obliged to love, praise, and glorify the great Creator of all. We are created for this. This is our destiny, our chief duty, upon the fulfilment of which depends our salvation. But of ourselves, we can offer no adequate or fitting tribute of praise, honor, or glory, to God. What pleasure can God take in the praise that comes out of the mouth of sinners? "Praise is not seemly in the mouth of a sinner," says the Wise Man. (Ecclus. 15 : 9.) And even if we be not sinners, we can not praise him as he deserves.

If a royal honor is due to a king, a princely honor to a prince, and an imperial honor to an emperor, a divine, an infinite honor is due to God. But how can we give him such an honor? All men and Angels are not able to do it, for they are all finite beings. What is the light of a glow-worm compared with the sun? But what we cannot do of ourselves, we can do by the sacrifice of the Mass. In it, Jesus offers himself to his heavenly Father;—he offers him his obedience, his sufferings, and abasement,—his body which was slain and his blood which was shed, in token and acknowledgement, in praise and honor of the incomprehensible greatness and goodness, the almighty power and supreme dominion of the Deity. And as God found infinite pleasure in the humiliations, labors, prayers, and sufferings of his divine Son while he lived on earth, and in the sacrifice of his life upon the Cross, so he now looks down with infinite complacency upon the altar

where that same divine Son represents them all to him anew in a wonderful and mysterious manner. He who offers this sacrifice of praise is himself infinite purity and holiness, is God himself. Therefore, his praise, his offering, is infinitely holy, of infinite value, and gives God an honor and glory such as are justly due him,—a truly divine honor. Hence, one single Mass gives incomparably more honor to God than the united worship of all Saints, Angels and men.

2. Holy Mass is, moreover, a *sacrifice of thanksgiving*. As we are not capable of praising God adequately, so we are not able to thank him sufficiently; for what can we render to the Lord in return for all his benefits? Our most fitting return for his love, his mercy, and his countless favors is to offer to him Jesus Christ, whom he has given us, and all the thanksgivings of Jesus during his mortal life, or those which he still offers to his heavenly Father from his love-inflamed Heart. Thus, we make to God a sufficient requital, and present to him a gift which is of the same value as the benefits and graces received from him; and this we do when we offer the Holy Mass as a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

Now we see clearly that the prayer which corresponds most closely with the end and object of the Mass, must be a prayer by which God is honored and glorified, a prayer of praise and thanksgiving. Such is the holy Rosary. Do we not say after every decade: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost"? Do we not at every *Ave* say: "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb"? Do we not praise therein the love of the Father who has sent his only-begotten Son into the world,—the love of the Son who laid down his life for us sinners,—and the love of the Holy Ghost by whose power "the Word was made flesh"? Do we not effectually give thanks to God by thus calling to mind his benefits and praising him for them?

The holy Sacrifice of the Mass has also been instituted for man's benefit,—for it is a sacrifice of propitiation for the many offences of which he has been guilty towards Almighty God; and it is a sacrifice of impetration, in order to obtain his assistance in all our necessities of soul and body. Think of the innumerable and heinous sins that are daily committed! When we consider how much God hates sin, we must ask in astonishment: Why does God endure so long? Why does he not strike down at once the bold, audacious sinner, instead of patiently supporting his insults, and bestowing upon him multiplied blessings and graces? It is Jesus, our blessed Lord, who pacifies his Father continually, and restrains his wrath. In each holy Mass, he represents to him anew his Passion and death. Showing him, as it were, his body slain and his blood shed for us, he ever pleads: "Remember, O Heavenly Father, how much I have suffered for the



sake of sinners ! Have compassion on them, for ' they know not what they do ! ' Remember that I have received these wounds and shed this blood for them,—that I have already suffered the punishment of their sins, and made atonement for them on the cross. Spare them, then, O my Father, and grant them thy grace, that they may do penance and obtain the pardon of their sins." And for Jesus' sake God has compassion. He withholds his avenging arm, and gives us, poor sinners, the grace to repent.

With that grace of pardon and reconciliation, he also gives us, through our Lord Jesus Christ, all other graces, and even temporal goods and blessings. In every holy Mass, our Lord offers himself and all his prayers, labors, and fatigues, his bitter Passion and death (by which he has merited all graces for us), to his heavenly Father ; and he asks him for his sake to apply to us his merits, and give us all that we need for soul and body. Oh ! how many mercies and favors have we already received from the holy Mass without knowing it, and how many more could we have received, if we had been more diligent and fervent in our attendance at that divine Sacrifice !

Here, again, the Rosary (if it be devoutly recited) is excellently adapted to the holy Mass as a sacrifice of Propitiation and Impetration. If God is to forgive us our sins, we must be sorry for them ; and this necessary sorrow is the special fruit of the Dolorous Mysteries of the Rosary. Our hearts can not help but be moved to tender grief, when we consider in detail all the torments which our Redeemer suffered for our sins ; when, in the Joyful Mysteries, we reflect upon how much God has loved us, and with what base ingratitude we have requited that love ; or when, in the Glorious Mysteries, we contemplate the sovereign felicity he has prepared for us, and which we have forfeited for trifling, momentary, yea, sometimes brutal, pleasures, delivering ourselves over to the ignominy and tortures of hell. If, as often as we recite the Sorrowful Rosary, we call to mind the bitter sufferings our sins have caused our Blessed Lord, we would, no doubt, be moved to hate and shun those sins for the future. Moreover, as the priest, in the holy Mass, offers the Blood of Christ for our reconciliation to God, so we offer, when we recite the Rosary, the same Blood in a spiritual manner, and say : " Pardon us, O Father, for Jesus' sake, who has sweated blood, who was scourged, crowned with thorns, loaded with the heavy cross, and crucified,—all for us, poor miserable sinners ! "

4. Finally, the Rosary is also an impetratory prayer. At every "*Our Father*," we present our petitions for the needs of body and soul ; and at every "*Hail Mary*," we pray the Mother of God to aid us by her powerful prayers now, and in the awful hour of death. The recollection, besides, of the chief events of the Life, Death, and Passion

of our Lord, of his Resurrection and Ascension into heaven, as well as of his sending down the Holy Spirit upon his Apostles, and assuming and crowning his Blessed Mother in Paradise, is eminently calculated to inspire our prayer with a holy confidence; even as the consideration of his intense sufferings and of the bitter dolours of his tender Mother, all endured for our sakes and to make satisfaction for our guilt, must needs fill our hearts with lively sentiments of contrition and humility. And you well know that "an humble and contrite heart the Lord will never despise," (Ps. 50: 18,) especially if its prayer be united with the prayer and sacrifice of Jesus.

Understanding, now, how appropriate the Rosary is to be recited during Mass, and how well it corresponds to the end and purpose of that holy Sacrifice, remember that it is essential, at the same time, to recite your beads with the utmost attention and devotion. It is better to recite only one decade in the right manner, than to say the whole of it hurriedly and with wilful distractions.

At the beginning of Mass, make your intention to recite the Rosary in union with the holy Sacrifice, in memory of the Life, Passion and Death of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, in order to praise God, to give him thanks, to obtain the pardon of your sins, and all the graces and blessings which you need. Say the Rosary, then, with all possible recollection and fervor. At the beginning of each decade, pause a little and reflect on the Mystery named therein. Suppose it should be the Mystery of the "Carriage of the Cross"; represent to yourself your Saviour, tottering under the weight of his cross, pale, blood-stained, and scarcely able to take another step, or support for a moment longer his heavy burden. Reflect, then, that your sins, especially your anger and impatience, have been the cause of his painful journey to Calvary's mount. Make an act of faith, that this same Saviour is now present on the altar, offering himself to his heavenly Father. Offer up to God the blood which he shed in carrying his cross, and which is now offered in the holy Mass for the forgiveness of your sins, especially for those which you have committed through anger, hatred, and enmity, and ask of God the grace of sincere sorrow and amendment. The same may be done with the other Mysteries. As often as you say, "*Glory be to the Father*, etc.," renew your intention, and unite your Rosary with the holy Sacrifice.

Alas! how many graces would be ours if we had always heard Mass in this manner! Resolve, then, for the future, to make it a practice to recite the Rosary properly and most fervently during Mass; and you will surely experience in yourselves the blessing of this prayer.

J. S.

## TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## FEAST OF THE MOST HOLY ROSARY.

*"Hail, Full of Grace, our Lord is with thee : Blessed art thou amongst women."* (Luke i : 28.)

It is a theological principle upon which the Church ever acts, that the law of faith and of prayer is the same, and that communion or fellowship in prayer is expressive of unity in faith. The beautiful devotion of the Rosary (to which the Church consecrates this Sunday, the first in October) is certainly one of the strongest evidences of this double fellowship. I can well understand with what confidence and joy all of you, who love to say your beads, will join in this practice to-day. For you feel that you are not praying alone. It is not merely your own feeble voice which is trying to make itself heard in Heaven. The Church diffused throughout the whole world is praying with you in precisely the same form ; and as you are one with her in faith, hope, and love, you must be filled with confidence, that a day which tells of former victories through the agency of this prayer, will bring special blessings upon you, and that the protection hitherto afforded in days of trial to the Church and her Head upon earth, will be secured and continued in answer to so many petitions sent before the throne of Grace, through the means of the Holy Rosary. To this end, we will consider :

- I. *The origin and significance of the Rosary ; and*
- II. *The advantages which result from its practice.*

I. The devotion of the Rosary, as it is now practised, was instituted by St. Dominic, very early in the thirteenth century, and has, therefore, been established more than six centuries. Its very permanence for so long a period proves it to be of higher origin than merely the counsel and work of man. St. Dominic's intention in propagating the devotion was to supply a defence and a protest against heresies which prevailed at the time, and which especially assailed the Mystery of the Incarnation.

In the year 1571, on the first Sunday in October, at the time that prayers and processions in honor of the Rosary were bringing down God's protection upon the Church, the infidel Turks, who were threatening the destruction of Christendom, were defeated utterly in the glorious battle of Lepanto. This was during the Pontificate of St. Pius V. In honor of this victory, and of another, in the year 1716, over the Turks, secured also through the Rosary, the Festival of to-

day was established, and became afterwards extended throughout the world.

The Rosary is a form of prayer consisting of the *Lord's Prayer*, the *Hail Mary*, and the Doxology or *Glory be to the Father*, etc. Fifteen Mysteries, in connection with the great central Mystery of the Incarnation, are selected as an object of meditation ; whilst, in honor of each, we recite one *Our Father*, followed by ten *Hail Marys*, and ending with one *Glory be to the Father*. Thus the whole Rosary consists of fifteen *Our Fathers*, one hundred and fifty *Hail Marys*, and fifteen *Glorias*. It is usual to divide the fifteen Mysteries into what is called five Joyful, the five Sorrowful, and the five Glorious, Mysteries. This division is clearly marked out for practice in the ordinary Rosary-beads, which, when said once through, will have served to commemorate any of the five Mysteries which we have mentioned.

In thus selecting these various Mysteries, and encouraging us to meditate upon each one in turn, whilst we recite the Rosary, shows how deeply she values the great Mystery of the Incarnation, and how she attends to and does not lose sight of any of its details. In order to make us value it the more, and never forget what are its claims upon our gratitude, each event connected with our Lord's Incarnation is not simply alluded to in the Rosary, but is dwelt upon for some time in a spirit of prayer. To pray for every grace and blessing through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, is always recommended by the Church, and this certainly is the most prominent intention of the Rosary.

If we just glance at the Mysteries one by one, we shall see how Scriptural they are, and how they help us to view the Incarnation in God's own light, recognizing in it the high and prominent position which he marked out for the Mother of the Word made Flesh. We begin by contemplating the Mystery of the Annunciation, as depicted in St. Luke, in which we picture to ourselves the Archangel Gabriel coming down from heaven to the Holy Virgin of Nazareth, addressing her as full of grace, and making known to her that the long-expected hour has at last arrived ; that she is to be the Mother of the Redeemer of the world ; and that, through the operation of the Holy Ghost, the wonderful Mystery is to be accomplished. Whilst our thoughts are thus engaged, we say the *Our Father*, the ten *Hail Marys*, and the Doxology. Then we pursue the Gospel account, and go in spirit with the Virgin-Mother, already bearing within her the Incarnate Word, to visit her cousin St. Elizabeth, and listen to the address which, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, the saint makes to the Mother of her Lord. Then, we pass on to the outward fulfilment of the Mystery, enter the Stable of Bethlehem, and see what the Shepherds saw, "*the Child with Mary his Mother.*" We pass on, afterwards, to the Temple of Jerusalem, and assist with the aged Simeon

and the devout widow Anna, at the Presentation of the Child Jesus. After that, we accompany Mary and Joseph in their anxious search for the Child, when, at the age of twelve, he was lost by them on their return to Nazareth from Jerusalem; and we share in the joy with which they were filled on finding him safe, and busy about his Father's work in the Temple in the midst of the Doctors. Thus, we have gone over the early events of the advent and life of our Lord, and partake especially of the joy of each Mystery whereon we have meditated.

Next, we proceed to contemplate the Mysteries of our Lord's bitter Passion. We commence with his Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, and we try to emulate the fervor with which he prayed at the commencement of his sufferings. Secondly, we follow him after he had been seized by his enemies, and meditate upon the cruel punishment to which Pilate condemned him—the Scourging at the Pillar. Passing next from his Crowning with Thorns to his condemnation and carriage of the Cross, we witness, lastly, his Crucifixion, and place ourselves at the foot of the Cross, with his Mother and the Disciple whom he specially loved. In this manner, we go over the chief events in the history of the Passion, and recite the prayers on the five Sorrowful Mysteries.

In conclusion, we have the Glorious Mysteries, wherein we contemplate first the Resurrection of our Blessed Lord, and associate with this event the glory bestowed upon his Blessed Mother, who fully illustrated St. Paul's principle: "*As you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you also be of the consolation.*" (2 Cor. 1 : 7.) Next, we accompany Jesus to Mount Olivet, and, looking up to Heaven, witness, in spirit, the glory of his Admirable Ascension. Afterwards, we place ourselves in imagination in the upper room with the disciples, with "*Mary the Mother of Jesus,*" (Acts 1 : 14) and witness the Coming down of the Holy Ghost. In the two remaining Mysteries we contemplate the Assumption, and, last of all, the Coronation in Heaven of the ever-blessed Mother of God. Although these two last events are not recorded in Scripture, the Church has shown her sanction of the tradition which records the Assumption and the Coronation of the Blessed Virgin, by the Festival which she celebrates in August, and by assigning to our Lady all the queenly titles which we love to give to her in the Litany of Loreto. Thus, as the Rosary began by contemplating an Angel coming down from heaven, to announce her great dignity to Mary, it ends by placing before us the glory of that same Immaculate Virgin as Queen of Angels, entering into Heaven, and crowned by her Son and the Eternal Father.

II. Let us now, as a further incentive towards practising the Devotion of the Rosary, consider *the advantages which attend it.*



1. Let it be remembered, first of all, that the Rosary is a *prayer*; that prayer is a duty repeatedly inculcated by our Divine Lord, and that he has promised such abundant rewards to those who piously practise it. We know, too, how the Church by word and example is always urging us to the fulfilment of this obligation; for she is constantly exhorting us to pray, even as she is constantly leading a life of prayer in her Festivals and beautiful Liturgy. Yet we are so apt to neglect this duty, or find it oftentimes so burdensome. Hence, we must be treated as little children, and have something given to us, as if it were, to amuse and coax us to our task. The Rosary answers this purpose. It is the favorite devotion of the poor, the blind, the little ones, and all who are unable to read. But, whilst the Rosary is thus alluring us to pray, it is no ordinary prayer we are offering up through its means. The frequent repetition of the "best of all prayers," as the Catechism properly calls the Lord's Prayer, and of the Hail Mary, an inspired address to our Blessed Lady, and of the Doxology of the Triune God, must be acceptable to Heaven and of great profit to ourselves.

2. The Rosary is more than a prayer; it is a *meditation* as well; and this adds greatly to the spiritual blessings it affords us. In order to gain the full benefit of the holy practice, it is essential that, whilst reciting the prayers, we place before our minds one or other of the several Mysteries. This constitutes mental, as well as vocal, prayer. You know what great store spiritual writers set by the practice of mental prayer, and how they associate it with progress in perfection. Those who are faithful in its practice become more closely united to God, and more detached from creatures; and even in their ordinary vocal prayers, they gain greater blessings than do those distracted Christians who, at such a time, "think not of God nor of what they say."

3. Again: the Holy Rosary, as we have seen already, brings before us the great Mystery of the Incarnation, our unfailing source of every grace and blessing. Our Blessed Lord has made the promise, that whatever we ask in his Name shall be granted to us. When, through his Joys, his Sorrows, or his Glories, we press our suit before the throne of God, it is through the name of JESUS we are praying, and therefore, we have the greatest confidence that we shall "*obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid.*" (Heb. 4: 16.) The Rosary is really a little epitome of the Gospel. It is the reading-book of the poor, in which they can study the Life of Christ, and gather instruction from each one of its valued details.

4. The Rosary also recommends itself to us as an *indulged prayer*.

It is not necessary to enumerate now what these indulgences are, but it is sufficient for you to remember that they are very numerous, and that they thus prove the Church's sanction and strong encouragement in behalf of this devotion. Have the intention, when you recite this prayer, to gain all the indulgences you can, and you will be proportionably enriched in return. That holy self-interest which should prompt us to shorten our future stay in Purgatory; as well as that beautiful spirit of fraternal charity which urges us to aid the poor souls suffering in that prison of fire, should both stimulate us to set a due value upon indulgences, the use of which, as our profession of faith declares, "is most profitable to Christian people." Here again we see the great practical benefit of the Rosary.

5. Moreover, this Devotion is most truly Catholic in its literal sense. It is universal in place, and it has been made venerable by the length of its existence. For more than seven hundred years it has been an incentive to prayer, and who can number the times that it has done its work, and has presented suppliants before the God of Mercy! In every nation under the sun, from its rising to its going down, hand-in-hand with belief in the Incarnation, has been preached the Devotion of the Rosary. Like the sign of the Cross, it is one of the most marked exterior expressions of our faith, and it is accepted in Heaven as a declaration of our faith, hope and love. In the Rosary we do not pray alone: at the moment we are saying it, we may be convinced that there are thousands elsewhere uniting with us in heart and in word; and this thought cannot fail to increase our confidence and fervor. To-day, especially, as the Festival is now of universal precept, many millions are combined together, and what the countless host in Heaven are doing before the Throne of God, singing with one voice, as the Preface of the Mass tells us, this is what is done throughout the world, when in unity of heart and word the same prayer is streaming up from earth to highest Heaven.

6. Lastly, this Devotion is most acceptable in its simplicity. It is the prayer of the poor, and of children. Every one can learn it. Among the simpler members of Religious Orders, it is oftentimes substituted in place of the Divine Office, and thus the Church apportions to it a share in the work of the Liturgy. Oftentimes, in the beautiful Psalms, when King David is begging for mercy, he calls himself a poor man, and in that spirit, he presses his demands. "*The Lord has become the refuge of the poor,*" (Ps. 9) he says in one place. Elsewhere, he says: "*The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord's throne is in Heaven; his eyes look down upon the poor man.*" (Ib. 10.) "*Incline thine ear, O Lord, and hear me; for I am needy and poor,*" (Ib. 75) is the way in

which he opens another of his songs. The Wise Man assures us, "*the prayer out of the mouth of the poor shall reach the ears of God.*" (Ecclus. 21 : 6.) Humble yourself, then, to pray as the poor do, and you will be offering to Heaven a violence which it will not resist: "*The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds.*" (Ib. 35 : 21.)

Listen, then, to-day to the voice and argument of the Church, as she places before you the Devotion of the Most Holy Rosary for your acceptance and practice. Love it at all times, and be assured that it will be the means of bringing innumerable blessings upon you. If it should occur to you to object to it, because of its frequent repetition of the same prayer, remember that this is an additional reason for your loving it the more, inasmuch as it resembles the prayer of our dear Lord in his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. There it was that our Lord said his Rosary ; for the Evangelist bears testimony to his repeating over and over again the same prayer : "*Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me : nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt.*" (Matth. 26 : 39.) We may depend upon it, that Almighty God is never tired of hearing the repetition of his own Son's prayer, the *Our Father*, nor of the *Hail Mary*—the address which he himself commissioned the archangel to make to the holy Mother of his Son. Many Saints are named as having especially loved the Rosary, with all its happy and holy repetitions. Among these are such practical and active Saints as St. Francis of Sales, St. Charles Borromeo, and St. Vincent de Paul. "Holy, holy, holy," forms the constant burden of the songs which the elect sing in heaven, and thus, the holy Rosary more closely resembles the worship offered to God in that glorious home of the Saints and Angels. It may serve, therefore, as a rehearsal for heaven. It will teach us how to pray, and prayer will teach us the sure and safe way to the bright Kingdom of eternal life. Amen.

SWEENEY, O. S. B.

## TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## THE FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

*“Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me. Shouldst not thou then have had compassion also on thy fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee?”* (Matth. 18 : 32, 33.)

The servant mentioned in the present Gospel, who owed his master ten thousand talents, is a type of the sinner,—who is always a debtor to God. He is a type of each one of us, my brethren ; for who amongst us is not forced to confess, with the psalmist : “My iniquities are gone over my head ; and as a heavy burden are become heavy upon me” (Ps. 37 : 5) ? Or, “Evils without number have surrounded me ; they are multiplied above the hairs of my head” (Ps. 39 : 13) ? It is true that we have many times confessed these debts to the Lord our God in the tribunal of Penance ; and as we (like the servant in our text) had nothing wherewith to discharge our indebtedness, the Lord has been so good to us as to forgive us our debts, on account of our prayers and contrition. But how is it that we are not equally generous with our neighbor ? How is it that the moment we are personally injured, even in the most trifling matter, we immediately desire revenge ? Ah ! my dearly beloved ! that we should bear injuries patiently, and never seek revenge, is

I. *The will of God*, and

II. *A great advantage to ourselves.*

I. When we receive injuries, we generally act as if they proceeded primarily from our neighbor. This is a great mistake : they are ordained by God.

1. *It is he who sends them to us*, and

2. *By his example, he has taught us the way in which we should bear them.*

1. The royal psalmist explains this truth to us when he says : “Thou hast made me a reproach to the fool. I was dumb, and I opened not my mouth, because thou hast done it.” (Ps. 38 : 9, 10.) “*Thou hast done it*,” that is, thou hast permitted it. The sin of the injury does not proceed from God, but it is by the permission of God, that the injury is sent to me, rather than to another. The cause of all human misfortunes lies in the secret councils of God, and is either a test of our virtue, a punishment of our sins, or a suggestion from divine

Providence to lead us to a better knowledge of ourselves. St. Bernard makes use of a beautiful comparison on this point: "God is the smith, our neighbors are the hammers or files, which he uses to purify us from the rust of sin, or to prepare for us the crown of eternal reward." Remember that our Lord says: "Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake; rejoice, and be exceeding glad: because your reward is very great in heaven." (Matth. 5: 11, 12.)

2. Let us, for a moment, reflect upon the injuries inflicted upon our Redeemer. "Behold this child is set. . . for a sign which shall be contradicted." (Luke 2: 34.) The Jews said: "We know that this man is a sinner." (John 9: 24.) He is from Nazareth; and "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" (John 1: 46.) "Behold a man that is a glutton and a wine-drinker, a friend of publicans and sinners." (Matth. 11: 19.) Yet, witness his meekness and patience under these insults and injuries! "Christ also suffered for us," says St. Peter, "leaving you an example, that you should follow his steps. . . Who when he was reviled, did not revile." (1 Pet. 2: 21, 23.) St. Chrysostom remarks that these injuries were inflicted upon Christ in the face of the whole city, before Jews and strangers, and we, Christians, cannot bear an insult in the presence of even a few persons.

II. When we properly understand the nature of injuries, we cannot deny that they are profitable and meritorious to us. If we have been the victim of "the strife of tongues," that which has been said of us is either true, or false.

1. *If it be true, then we have an opportunity of reforming ourselves;*
2. *If it be false, then our merit and advantage are so much the greater.*

1. When Semei cursed David, the king forbade any one to avenge this insult, saying: "Perhaps the Lord may look upon my affliction: and the Lord may render me good for the cursing of this day." (2 Kings 16: 12.) If any one man is to be feared more than another, it is the flatterer. He who reproaches us with our faults, gives us an opportunity of amendment, of transforming ourselves from wicked into good people. We have an instance of this in the publican. The Pharisee reproached him with his sins, and, in so doing, was the cause of his justification. St. Augustine relates a similar experience of his mother, St. Monica. At one time, in her early youth, this saint was accustomed in secret to make too free with the wine in her father's cellar. Having occasion, one day, to reprove her maid-servant for some fault, the latter, who had detected her mistress's failing, turned upon her and insultingly called her a wine-bibber. St. Monica profited



by this insolent speech, and, from that time forward, reformed herself in this particular. My dear Christians, will you still continue to repay insults with insults, evil for evil? On the contrary, you should love your neighbor the more on this account, and thank him, that, instead of injuring you, he has only informed you of the opinion which men justly entertain of you. But if you still look upon his action as an injury, amend your life, and cry out gratefully with the psalmist: "It is good for me that thou hast humbled me." (Ps. 118:71.)

2. If on the other hand, you are not guilty of the thing laid to your charge, then thank God heartily for giving you the opportunity of acquiring great merit. For this reason, the Apostle of the Gentiles says: "Therefore, I take pleasure in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake." (2 Cor. 12:10.) The greater the victory, the greater will be the merit; and there is no victory more glorious than that which we gain over ourselves. "The patient man," says the Wise Man, "is better than the valiant: and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh cities." (Prov. 16:32.) The time in which a man receives injuries, is the time in which he is most pleasing to the Lord, for then he can offer up even his afflictions with a supernatural motive. He can say with the psalmist: "O Lord, because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face." (Ps. 68:8.) How patient was not king David! And on account of this virtue, he hoped that God's grace would render him pleasing in his sight: "O Lord, remember David, and all his meekness." (Ps. 131:1.)

Comprehending, at last, this fundamental truth, let us conduct ourselves in such a manner, in the various trials of life, that we may be able to say with the Royal Prophet: "All these things have come upon us, yet we have not forgotten thee: and we have not done wickedly in thy covenant." (Ps. 43:18.) But, perhaps, there are some amongst us whose hearts are so obdurate, that they are moved, neither by the consideration of what is pleasing to God, or what is advantageous to themselves: some to whom revenge seems sweeter than the acquiring of merit. These wicked ones shall draw down upon themselves the sorrowful fate of the unforgiving servant of the Gospel. He had, indeed, received the remission of his debt; but, because he was so unforgiving to his fellow-servant, "His lord being angry, delivered him to the torturers, until he should pay all the debt." Mark well the conclusion which our Saviour draws from this parable: "So, also, shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts." Amen.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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GOD PUNISHES NOT ONLY THE SINNER BUT ALSO THOSE WHO ARE  
ACCESSORY TO THE SIN.

*"His lord commanded that he should be sold, and his wife and children." (Matt. 18 : 25.)*

At the time of Christ, among some of the pagan nations, as well as with the Jews, there existed a certain law which allowed a creditor not only to sell his debtor, when he refused to pay his debts, but also the latter's wife and children, in order that the debt might be liquidated by the proceeds of the sale. That such procedure was really customary, is evident from the fourth Book of Kings, chap. 4 : 1, where a widow came to the prophet Eliseus saying : " Behold the creditor is come to take away my two sons." Truly, a cruel law and custom !—unless the wife and the children of the debtor actually led or prompted him to contract his debts ; for, in such case, it is but just and right that the accessory to the sin should share equally with the guilty one in the punishment of the sin. Thus, God punishes, and according to his justice must always punish, not only

I. *The sinner*, but also

II. *The accessory to the sin.*

I. God is bound by the laws of his eternal justice to punish every sinner who transgresses his commandments ; for, says St. Paul : " God will render to every one according to his works." (Rom. 2 : 6.)—that is, he will punish the sinner, and reward the just. "*I am the Lord thy God,*"—thus reads the introduction to the divine Commandments ; *Thou shalt*, the Lord continues, do this, and *thou shalt* omit that, for thou art my servant. Why does the Lord speak thus ? In order to indicate to us that he, our Lord and God, has the power to reward us, if we obey him, but also to punish us, if we transgress his commandments. And how could God, when he cries out to us, *Thou shalt* or *Thou shalt not*, give us such severe commandments and prohibitions, if he could not resent and punish their violation ? And where would be the justice of God when he so often threatens sinners with punishment, if he would permit the sinner to violate his commandments with impunity ?

1. Just on account of his justice, he must punish every sin, mortal and venial, either in time or in eternity. He frequently punishes small

sins very sensibly in this world. The Sacred Scripture proves this. *Moses* was punished by God for a temporary distrust, by not permitting him to enter into the Promised Land, and allowing him to behold it only from a distance. He punished *the sister of Moses* with a loathsome leprosy on account of her murmuring against him, the holiest Law-giver ; he punished *Lot's wife* because she acted contrary to the instructions of his angel, not to look back upon the burning city of Sodom. For her disobedience, she was changed into a pillar of salt. *David*, because of a little vanity in his military power, was condemned to suffer the loss of seventy thousand of his soldiers. Moreover, God punishes with a severe judgment in eternity the least sin, unrepented of here in time. Thus, read the words of Christ : " But I say unto you, that every idle word, that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment." (Matt. 12 : 36.) And those other words of Christ clearly prove a sensible torture in Purgatory : " Amen, I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou pay the last farthing." (Matt. 5 : 26.) This punishment, I repeat it, is demanded by the justice of God because his infinite sanctity is grievously offended by every, even the least venial, sin.

2. Now, if the justice of God so severely punishes the one who sins in small things, what punishment must it not inflict upon him who commits mortal sins ! What severe punishments already in this life ! " Destruction and unhappiness in their ways," says the Psalmist (13 : 3) ; and St. Paul says : " Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil." (Rom. 2 : 9.) Think how our first parents suffered for their sin ! How miserable was Cain after the murder of Abel ! What anguish and affliction were the portion of the Prodigal Son ! There can be no doubt that sin is the cause of all misery in the world, as it really is *the only evil in the world*. Even in time, the just punishment of God overtakes the sinner. How much more terrible, then, must be his punishment in eternity ! Job says : " The sinner hath stretched out his hand against God, and hath strengthened himself against the Almighty, he shall not depart from darkness." (Job 15 : 25, 30.) And the Apostle says : " If we sin wilfully, there is nothing left but a certain dreadful expectation of judgment." (Hebr. 10 : 26.) Will not the justice of God execute the threat which he utters against sinners by his Apostle. " Know you not," he says, " that the unjust shalt not possess the kingdom of God. Be not deceived : Neither fornicators, nor idolators nor adulterers, nor the effeminate, nor Sodomites, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor railers, nor extortioners, shall possess the kingdom of God." (1 Cor 6 : 9, 10.)

Behold, my beloved brethren, how the Lord punished the wicked servant in the Gospel of this day, by delivering him to the torturers !

Even so, shall the justice of God punish every sinner who does not repent of his sin. God will punish him in time with sufferings and tribulations of every description; and with hell in eternity. If we would avoid these dreadful results, let us henceforth abstain from every sin; so that, when God (like the lord in the Gospel of this day) summons us before his tribunal, to give an account of our stewardship, we may escape the hands of the eternal torture.

II. In the beginning of our meditation, I said that God not only punishes the sinner, but also him who is accessory to the sin. In the Gospel of this day, the Lord not only commanded his servant to be sold, if he should not pay the debt, but also his wife and children, in order that the proceeds of the sale might fully satisfy the debt. From this I conclude, that the wife and children of the debtor, perhaps through shiftlessness, extravagance, or a lazy and disorderly life, bore part of the guilt of the servant, so that payment was impossible to him. In this case, wife and children had also to bear the punishment, for he who participates in or causes the sin of another, or becomes accessory to it, must justly participate in its punishment. Have not the accomplice, the seducer, and instigator jointly committed the sin? Perhaps that foul, that enormous sin would not have been committed at all, if the seducer, the wicked counselor, had not enticed and misled the wretched sinner. That unjust law-suit would never have been commenced, if some intermeddling neighbor had not fed the flame of dissension and urged on the parties to litigation. That theft, that robbery, would never have taken place had it not been for certain wicked accomplices. How many sins of impurity would not have been committed without seducers? How many a once pious Christian would not have suffered shipwreck of his faith, if the infamous and blasphemous discourses of others had not driven him first to doubt, and then to utterly disbelieve? And shall such helpers, accomplices, instigators, seducers, and counselors to sin escape God's punishment of sin? Never! They shall suffer as accessory to the sin no less than the one who actually commits it. St. Chrysostom even says that the seducer shall be more severely punished by God than his victim: "You," he says, "who have caused the ruin of others shall have to suffer a greater punishment, than those whom you have seduced. For the sin in itself is not so great, as the seduction of many others to sin." Remember what St. Paul writes in his Epistle to Timothy, thereby admonishing every Christian: "Be not a partaker of other men's sins." (1 Tim. 5 : 22.) Be not partakers of other men's sins by being to others the occasion of sin, because you must, one day, give an account of that sin, and you shall be punished for it. And you, parents, masters and mistresses, be careful not to command your children, subjects and servants anything sinful, nor by your silence, your care-

lessness, your criminal want of correction, suffer the excesses of your children or subjects to go unpunished ; for all the evil which you might have hindered, but failed to hinder, will be laid at your door. Let no one make himself partaker of another man's sins by consent, for instance, by laughing at improper or indecent words and discourses against holy purity, or by silently countenancing any ridicule or mockery of holy faith and the Church of God. Excite no one to enmity, hatred, malice or revenge ; neither instigate others to law-suits, especially to unjust ones. Never help to carry out injustices, take no part in them, neither by word or deed ; and do not praise or defend that which is bad in others : for, "Woe to you that call evil good, and good evil," says the prophet. (Is. 5 : 20.) Above all, guard against seducing to impurity those souls, hitherto adorned with the garment of innocence ; for : "Woe to that man through whom the scandal (or the seduction) cometh," (Matth. 18 : 7.) Our own sins, alas ! are a sufficiently heavy burden ; for by them we have already heaped up upon us enough of responsibility,—enough of God's anger and indignation. Therefore, let us tremble to increase this wrath of God, this accountability, by making ourselves accessory to the sins of others, and let us without intermission pray with the royal psalmist : "From my secret sins, cleanse me, O Lord, and from those of others, spare thy servant." (Ps. 18 : 13, 14.) Amen.

J. F.



TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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INGRATITUDE.

*“ Then the Pharisees going away, consulted among themselves, how to ensnare him in his speech.”* (Matth. 22:15.)

Great were the benefits which the Pharisees received from our loving Saviour, but greater still was their ingratitude to him in return. He had shown them, by a variety of parables, the miserable condition of their souls. He had given them the most convincing proofs of his Divinity. In their presence he had restored sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, health to the sick, and even life to the dead ; nevertheless, their anger and rage against him daily increased, and to-day we find them taking counsel together how they may compass his destruction by entrapping him in his speech. Where is the heart that will not be touched by such base ingratitude ? Where, the man who is not justly indignant at such wickedness ? But, my dearly beloved, let each one of us take heed to himself ; let each one of us look into his own conscience, and count the number of his sins. Are not we far more ungrateful than were the Scribes and Pharisees ? And is not our ingratitude, alas ! greater in proportion to the magnitude of the benefits which we have received ? Let us then, to-day, consider two important truths.

- I. *God impressively demands our gratitude,*
- II. *He punishes the ungrateful very severely.*

I. That God demands our gratitude is sufficiently proved by the impressive words whereby he

1. *Enjoins gratitude upon his children ; and*
2. *Laments over the ungrateful.*

1. “ In all things, give thanks ; for this is the will of God.” (1 Thess. 5:18.) Whenever the Apostles wished to be very impressive upon any point of doctrine, they always quoted the will, or the commands, of God as their authority. Thus, St. John, speaking of the love of the neighbor, says : “ This is his commandment : that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ ; and love one another, as he hath given commandment unto us.” (1 John 3 : 23.) There is, then, no doubt that the duty of gratitude is of the utmost importance, since the

Apostle adds to the command the solemn words: "This is the will of God." Hence, he frequently repeats his admonition. "Be ye thankful," he says to the Colossians. (Col. 3: 15.) And again, to the Thessalonians he says, by way of furnishing them an example for their imitation: "Therefore, we also give thanks to God without ceasing." (1 Thess. 2: 13.) "I give thanks to him who had strengthened me, to Christ Jesus our Lord." (1 Tim. 1: 12.)

We read of the anxiety of the psalmist on account of the fulfilment of the will of God in this respect: "What shall I render to the Lord, for all the things that he hath rendered to me?" (Ps. 115: 12.) And the Wise Man says: "I will give glory to thy name: for thou hast been a helper and protector to me." (Ecclus. 51: 2.) "What wages shall we give him? or what can be worthy of his benefits?" (Tob. 12: 2.)

2. But how sadly impressive are not the lamentations of Holy Writ over our ingratitude! The Lord calls upon heaven and earth to testify their astonishment at the malice of this vice. "Hear, O ye heavens, and, give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken. I have brought up children, and exalted them; but they have despised me." (Isai. 1: 2.) "Thou hast forsaken the God that begot thee, and hast forgotten the Lord that created thee." (Deut. 32: 18.) With what impressive words does not Christ question the grateful leper: "Were there not ten made clean? and where are the nine?" (Luke 17: 17.) What a world of sorrowful meaning in these words: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel hath not known me"! (Isai. 1: 3.) Hear, too, the pathetic complaint of the Lord by the mouth of the Prophet Micheas: "O my people, what have I done to thee, or in what have I molested thee? Answer thou me." (Mich. 6: 3.) And, in order to bring their ingratitude still more strongly before them by rehearsing the various benefits he had conferred upon them, he continues: "For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and delivered thee out of the house of slaves; and I sent before thy face Moses, and Aaron, and Mary: O my people, remember, I pray thee, what Balach the king of Moab purposed; and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, from Setim to Galgal, that thou mightest know the justices of the Lord." (Mich. 6: 4, 5.)

II. If the love and the will of God are not sufficient to move us, let us consider *the fearful punishments*, which, because of their ingratitude, the Lord hath inflicted

1. *On individuals*, and
2. *On whole nations*.

1. "Where there is ingratitude, there grace has no place," says St.

Bernard. "One may justly esteem that lost which is bestowed upon the ungrateful." But, besides this, ingratitude is generally the forerunner of an unhappy death. I might cite many examples of this truth; but that of the traitor Judas is sufficiently conclusive. Behold how this evil-doer, "being hanged, burst asunder in the midst; and all his bowels gushed out." (Acts 1: 18.) He was well aware of his sin; he "brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and ancients, saying: I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." (Matth. 27: 3.) His ingratitude in betraying his generous, divine Master seemed to him a crime of such enormity, that he could hope for no pardon for it, and, in despair, he killed himself. O, how often have we been even more ungrateful than Judas was!

2. A glance at history is sufficient to show us how whole countries have been devastated as a punishment for this detestable vice of ingratitude. The destruction of the splendid city of Jerusalem is to be ascribed to no other cause. O ungrateful city! listen to your weeping Saviour lamenting over your sad fate. You have received so many blessings, and still you remain obstinately ungrateful. With sighs and tears, he prophesies your destruction. St. Chrysostom says that the Jews were exterminated and extirpated solely because of their ingratitude. In them was fulfilled what was written by the Evangelist: "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." (Matth. 21: 43.) It is not necessary to pursue this subject further; but if we seek for the cause of famine, pestilence, destruction by earthquakes, and so on, we shall find that ingratitude has caused them in almost every case, and that God visits us with these punishments because of our want of gratitude for past benefits.

Let us resolve then, for the future, to be more grateful to our good and loving God. He does not, indeed, demand anything difficult from us in asking for our gratitude. He only desires that we acknowledge his benefits and thank him for them. Not as if he stood in need of our thanks. No! but that we may gain the friendship of the Author of all good; for thus he will have a greater care over us. If, hitherto, we have been among the number of those of whom he complains, saying, "They repaid me evil for good," (Ps. 34: 12,) let us, from this time forward, contritely confess, with the royal prophet: "To thee only have I sinned,"—which, according to St. Chrysostom, will be the same as to say: "I have shown myself ungrateful for thy benefits, and notwithstanding all the good which I have received from thee, I have been foolishly forgetful of thee. Ah! my God! for the future, I shall never be guilty of this ingratitude again!" Amen.

## TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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### THE COURAGEOUS PROFESSION AND PRACTICE OF OUR FAITH.

*"Master, we know that thou carest not for any man : for thou dost not regard the person of men."* (Matt. 22 : 16.)

Although the Pharisees (according to the Gospel of to-day) grievously sinned against our Lord by consulting among themselves how to ensnare him in his speech ; and, through their disciples, really made the impious attempt ; yet, at the same time, they involuntarily paid homage to our Saviour by giving him, through their messengers, a twofold praise and encomium. "Master," said they, "we know that thou art a true speaker, and teachest the way of God in truth." Thus, in the first place, they openly praised our Lord's veracity, and publicly confessed his doctrine to be the truth. In the second, they bore testimony to his courage and utter lack of human respect, saying : "Thou carest not for any man ; for thou dost not regard the person of men." He boldly proclaimed his Gospel, without fear of any man, high or low, rich or poor, ignorant or learned.

A glorious example for us, dear Christians, and for every Christian, to imitate in our lives. We, too, like our Lord, when opportunity offers, without human respect or fear, must do what the Gospel, the commandments of God and the precepts of the Church, our conscience, and Christian duty prescribe. We should especially not care for any man when there is question :

I. *Of professing our Faith*, and

II. *Of living according to our Faith*.

I. We sin against faith in a threefold way :

1. By *renouncing* our faith, as apostates, heretics, or infidels ;
2. By being ashamed of our faith, and, from human respect or fear, *denying* it ;
3. By not *defending* our faith when it is attacked by unbelievers or irreligious scoffers.

Thanks be to God ! there are very few unfortunate Catholics, who entirely renounce their faith, and embrace unbelief ! I have no reason to fear that any of you will ever make this unfortunate step, hence I will not tire your patience by speaking of such Christians. But

there are a great many, who, in temptations, deny their faith. How often is a Catholic asked in mixed society whether he is a Catholic or a Protestant ! And alas ! there is many a weak, cowardly son of the Church who would fain be a Catholic among Catholics,—and among Protestants, if not actually a Protestant, at least (what he terms) a “*liberal*” Catholic. Through a base human respect, he fears to displease his Protestant friends, and therefore denies that holy faith, which he confessed at his baptism, and which he vowed anew in holy Confirmation. How often does it happen that Catholics, eating with Protestants at the same table, are ashamed to say grace, to sign themselves with the sign of the cross before and after meals, lest they should be known as Catholics ! Such men, again, in non-Catholic circles are accustomed to let fall certain expressions which imply that they are not too much wedded to the principles of their faith ; they are heard declaring that one religion is as good as another, that all creeds conduct to heaven if one only believes in God and leads a moral life. These are what are called our “*liberal*” Catholics. They virtually deny their faith ; unlike our Lord, they regard the person of men, because they fear to displease Protestants. Finally, it often happens that, when the Catholic Church is attacked by Protestants or unbelievers, when certain tenets or practices of our holy faith are misrepresented, or sneered at, these cowardly Catholics are found to keep silence, or even countenance, by laughter or weak concessions, the falsehoods and scoffs of our enemies. Thus again, they show that they care for man rather than for God ; they regard the person of men, because they fear to displease Protestants by a brave defense of their Church and her doctrines.

Are such Catholics imitators of our divine Saviour, to whom even the Pharisees, his enemies, did not hesitate to say : “*Master, we know that thou art a true speaker, and teachest the way of God in truth. Thou dost not care for any man : nor dost thou regard the person of men.*” Do not such degenerate children of the Church directly deny their faith, when they are ashamed to confess it before Protestants and unbelievers ? when they are ashamed to manifest it outwardly by the sign of the cross and prayer ? when they observe a profound silence, and do not defend from insult and mockery the doctrine and discipline of their Great Mother ? Assuredly, by such conduct they deny our Lord no less than Peter, when he was asked by a miserable maid-servant whether or not he was one of the disciples of Jesus.

Through human respect, they cry out with the weak Apostle : “*I know not the man !*” And Christ makes answer in his turn : “*Whoever shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven, but whosoever shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven.*” (Matt. 10 : 32, 33.) How terrible



will be the predicament of the cowardly Catholic at the judgment-seat of God, where Jesus, his Judge, will deny him, will refuse to acknowledge him as his true and faithful disciple ! Can he hope to be saved when the Apostle makes eternal salvation depend upon the open and public confession of faith ? He declares : “ With the heart, we believe unto justice ; but *with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation.* ” (Rom. 10 : 10.) Listen then to St. Augustine when he says : “ Confess your faith ; for Christ is denied not only by him, who says of him that he is not Christ, but also by him, who, being a Christian, says of himself that he is no Christian. As it is profitable for eternal life to confess Christ, so it is conducive to eternal death to deny Christ.” And the same saint says : “ Why did Peter do such rigorous penance for the denial of his faith ? “ Because he knew what a great crime it was with the heart to have believed unto justice, but with the mouth not to have made confession unto salvation.” Let us then, my beloved, care not for any man or men, when there is question of openly confessing our faith, neither let us care for any man or men when there is question of *living according to our faith.*

II. As we are bound to boldly confess ourselves Catholics whenever the occasion calls for it, so are we bound to prove ourselves such by leading the lives of truly good and practical Catholics. Unfortunately, there are, at all times, in and outside of the Church, certain tepid, worldly-minded souls who neglect their Christian duties, and look with an evil, censorious eye upon their more fervent and zealous neighbors. It is a reproach, and a grievous annoyance to them that others should pray with fervor, go daily to Mass, and frequently to confession and Communion ; and by their diligent attendance at all devotions of the Church, serve God very perfectly and acquire merits for heaven.

Tell me, ye good and fervent Christians, should you care for the sneers and censures of such people, for their reprehension or mockery ? Must you renounce your pious, God-fearing life, and follow them in their lukewarmness and impiety ? Never ! Look at your Saviour ; of him, it is said in the Gospel of this day, that he did not care for any man. He did the will of his heavenly Father, with an utter disregard of the opinions of the people, and especially of the Scribes and Pharisees. Behold your pattern and your model ! It must be enough for you to know that you are doing the will of God, that by your pious, Christian life you are pleasing him ; and then you need not concern yourselves about the opinions of irreligious worldlings or careless Catholics.

They may mock at your fervor, they may scoff at your prayers, and, above all, at your strict observance of the precept of fasting. “ Fast

ing," you will hear them say, "is a human commandment which we are not bound to keep"; or again: "In this enlightened age, thank heaven! we have shaken off all such trammels!" They may even quote Scripture with the devil in the desert: "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man." (Matth. 15 : 11.) Tell me, dear Christians, should you care for, or imitate such men, and, perhaps, commit mortal sin in order to escape their raillery and censure? No! a thousand times no! Look rather at the divine Saviour, who cared not for any man, but has left you an example of the most austere fasting and abstinence. Let worldlings go their way, revelling in riches, honors, and sensual delights. You are not made for this world, but for a higher, better world beyond the grave. Allow no temptations, no cowardly fear or human respect, to lead you to renounce your quiet Christian life, and plunge into the vortex of pleasure, avarice, or ambition. Life is meant for something nobler and purer than revelry and song, pleasure-trips and excursions, extravagant fashions and follies. A true Christian leads a retired life, cares nothing for what worldlings say or do, and finds his pleasure and only happiness in God and his holy service.

Finally, he regards not the person of men, when there is question of boldly discountenancing a scandal. If, in the presence of the young, as well as the old, yes, even before innocent children, the good Christian hears a wicked person relate indecent stories or improper anecdotes, or speak any word which may defile innocence or bring a blush to the cheek of modesty, he rises up in holy indignation, and with Christian courage, openly protests against the outrage on purity and decency. Even though the speaker be his superior in age or authority, he cries out to him in words of the Baptist: "*It is not lawful*—be silent!" You are not allowed to carry on such discourses!" Thus he prevents scandal being given to all present, and perhaps hinders, as well, many and grievous sins.

From what has been said, we perceive how important and necessary it is that the Catholic should care not for men, nor regard the person of men when there is question of confessing his faith, and of living according to it. Let us regard God, and not men, in all we say or do. His commandments, his will, not the will of men, is to be the rule of our life. If it comes to the confession of our faith, let us declare without fear or human respect: "I am a Christian, a Catholic, and as such I believe what Christ has taught and what the Catholic Church teaches!" If worldlings or lukewarm Christians endeavor to entice or turn us from a Christian life, and the fulfilment of what the Gospel or the holy Church of Christ prescribes, let us say again: "I am a Christian, a Catholic; and as such, I am determined, with God's grace, to live and to die!" Amen.

J. F.

## TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## GOOD RESOLUTIONS IN CONFESSION.

*“And when the crowd was turned out, he went in, and took her by the hand: and the girl arose.”* (Matth. 9 : 25.)

As sin is the spiritual death of the soul, we may justly call the conversion of a sinner a spiritual resurrection. The real conversion of a sinful soul is a far more important and divine work than the raising up of a dead man to life, because, while the Pharisees did not attempt to gainsay the fact that our Lord restored the dead to life, they yet resented his assuming to himself the power to forgive sins. We are, alas ! able, of ourselves, to fall into sin, but of our own power we are incapable of rising out of this state of moral death, from which we can alone be delivered by the grace of God, joined with our co-operation. In the resurrection of the ruler's daughter, mentioned in to-day's Gospel, we have a true image of the conversion of the sinner. But we must take notice of two important circumstances recorded in the text, as having been attendant on this miracle of Jesus, viz.: that when he raised the dead girl to life, “The crowd was turned out”; and “He took her by the hand.” Herein are contained two significant lessons for our instruction. In the conversion of the sinner, the crowd of worldly things and sinful satisfactions must be expelled from the soul, and divine grace must take her by the hand,—in other words, he who truly desires to be converted must turn by a firm resolution

I. *From the creature, and*

II. *To the Creator.*

I. “The crowd was turned out.” These words seem to imply not only

1. *A turning away from creatures;* but also

2. *A FORCIBLE turning away.*

1. Could not our Saviour have restored the ruler's daughter to life in the presence of all the people? We cannot doubt it. He had the power, but he did not wish to do so. He did all things according to the dictates of his adorable wisdom. This restoration to life he in-

tended as a perfect model for our conversion. It must remove all obstacles out of the way, the first of which is attachment to creatures. "He that created thee without thy help, will not save thee without thy co-operation," says St. Augustine. "Return ye every man from his wicked way," cries out the prophet. (Jerem. 35 : 15.) What is meant by conversion? Is it not a turning back from the path of wickedness, a turning away from creatures, which are the objects of sin?

2. But, as this cannot be done without doing violence to ourselves, the sinner must heartily resolve to follow the injunction of the Apostle, "Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body," (Rom. 6 : 12,) and say with him : "I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members." (Rom. 7 : 23.) "For the good which I will, I do not ; but the evil which I will not, that I do." (Verse 19.) Thus we see that a unanimous conquest of ourselves is needed. Observe that St. Paul does not say that the lust of sin shall not be in you, but that it shall not "*reign*" in you ; it is the consent of the will (and not merely the temptation) that constitutes sin. That we may not fall into it, we must take a firm resolution to avoid not only sin, but all the occasions that lead to it ; to despise all the enticements of evil companions ; to set aside all human respect. "Let us break their bonds asunder : and let us cast away their yoke from us." (Ps. 2 : 3.) "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence ; and the violent bear it away." (Matth. 11 : 12.) Take notice that the sacred text does not say : Let us *lay aside* the bonds, but *let us break them asunder*. Only the violent *bear away* the kingdom of heaven ; and even in the Gospel of to-day, we read, not that the crowd were invited to step aside, but that they were *turned out*.

II. When the obstacles were removed, so that our Lord could approach the dead girl, "he went in, and took her by the hand." These words seem to indicate that the newly converted should

1. *Turn to their Creator ; and*
2. *That they should hold fast to him, and never depart from him.*

1. "He took her by the hand." An indication that no one can come to him, without his help. In order to encourage us, he says : "I desire not the death of him that dieth !" (Ezech. 18 : 32.) And wherefore does he help us, unless for our conversion,—offering to us his hand not only that we may be converted, but almost compelling us by drawing us to himself? In corporal death, the body loses the soul ; and in spiritual death, the soul, through sin, loses the spirit of God ; but if, by penance, man turns again to God, and draws near him, he

regains his soul, that is, the Spirit of God. The Sacrament of Penance is the path of return to God, in which the divine Spirit, and not our own spirit, is the active agent. When one who is perishing from cold is warmed by the heat of the fire, he does not doubt that the warmth proceeds from the fire, without which he would have been frozen.

2. When the soul turns to God, it must firmly resolve never to turn away from him again. It is true that the literal word in the Gospel is, he "took" her by the hand, but, without doubt, the real meaning is, he *held* her by the hand. The soul which clings closely to God may exclaim with the bride in the Canticle: "I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him: and I will not let him go." (Cant. 3:4.) The soul can then truly say to its Beloved, with the psalmist: "Thou hast held me by my right hand: and by thy will, thou hast conducted me." (Ps. 72:24.) Many are converted, but, unfortunately, their conversion is not permanent. Let us, with holy Job, be resolved: "My justification, which I have begun to hold, I will not forsake." (Job 27:6.) For it is not he that is converted, but "he that shall persevere to the end," that "shall be saved." (Matth. 24:13.) "And when the crowd was turned out, he went in, and took her by the hand: and the girl arose." Dearly beloved! when we have, in the prescribed manner, turned from the creature to the Creator, then we arise from the death of sin. I hope that I have not placed before you in vain, this figure of our spiritual resurrection! Would that I could be sure that even one soul had, to-day, really arisen to a new life, with the daughter of the ruler! And why should I not hope for this consummation? The arm of the Lord is not shortened. O Lord, our conversion is as much thy work as is the raising of the dead to life! "Thou hast said: Be converted, O ye sons of men!" (Ps. 89:3.) We are ready to obey thy injunction, but we cannot accomplish it without thy grace. Therefore, in the name of all present, I pray: "Convert us, O Lord, to thee, and we shall be converted." (Lament. 5:21.) Amen.

B.



TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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ON PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

*“The end of all approaches. Be prudent therefore, and watch in prayer.”* (1 Pet. 4 : 7.)

One day or other, we must all die. After death, an eternity of happiness or misery awaits us. Our everlasting joy or woe depends upon the condition of our souls at the moment of death. Knowing all this, can it be possible, that there are Christians who refuse to adopt all the means of securing for themselves the blessing of a good death? When we hear of one who dies a sudden and unprepared death, we compassionate him and say: “Alas! what has become of his poor soul?” Why, then, do we not look to our own souls, and live in a state of continual preparation for our end? It may be that the misfortune of a sudden death may happen to us, but whether sooner or later, whether prepared or unprepared, whether we think of it or not, we must, at last, surrender our souls into the hands of God. The place and the hour are already determined upon in his counsels, and the executioner is even now stealing unseen upon our footsteps; why, then, do we not endeavor to become daily more and more united to Jesus Christ, who will soon become our Judge. In every succeeding age cities and kingdoms are peopled with new beings, and their predecessors buried in their graves. Where are now the people who lived here a century ago? Gone into eternity. And thus, my brethren, in a hundred years, even in a much shorter time, neither you nor I shall be alive in this world, but we shall be either happy or miserable forever in the next,—either saved or lost for all eternity. Let us, therefore, consider together :

- I. *How necessary it is to prepare for death;*
- II. *How miserable is an unprovided death; and*
- III. *How sweet is death to those who prepare for it.*

I. How much is contained in these words : “*We must die!*” Each one of you repeat it to yourselves : “I must certainly die!” As, after your birth, your names were entered in the baptismal register, so will they, one day, be entered in the book of the dead. Either the day will come when you will never see the night, or the night will come when you will never see the morning. As you now speak of the memory of your deceased ancestors, so will posterity speak of you.

As you now frequently hear of the deaths of your friends and acquaintances, so will others hear of your death, whilst *you* will be gone into eternity.

What would you say of a criminal on the way of execution, who kept looking about him here and there, and attending only to the diversions on the road? Would you not esteem him a madman, or a hardened unbeliever? Yet, this very moment, you are advancing to meet *your* death! And what are your thoughts? You know that you must die, and that you can die *only once*. You believe that, after this life, another and never-ending existence awaits you; an existence which will be happy or miserable, according as your accounts shall be found at the hour of your judgment. Believing all these truths, is it possible you can attend to anything else save making preparation for a good death?

Out of the graves of the dead, is continually issuing a voice which says: "What we are, *you* will soon be!" The same is repeated to you by the portraits and photographs of your deceased relatives and friends, by their letters, their rooms, their beds, their clothing,—by every article, in fact, which they once possessed and used, but which they have now quitted and left behind forever.

Oh! how much depends on the last moment of our lives—an eternity of delights or an eternity of torments! What folly, therefore, for the sake of wretched momentary pleasures to run the risk of an evil end, and of an everlasting life of misery hereafter! O God, how do those miserable criminals tremble, who are condemned to cast lots for their lives, when they know that all depends upon the favorable or unfavorable turn of the dice! Tell me, Christians, if such were your fate,—what would you not give to be liberated from it? But faith teaches you, that, one day, the eventful moment will infallibly arrive on which will depend your eternal life or death. Either you believe this, or you do not believe. If you believe that you can die only once, and that if you die ill, the consequences will be eternal without the least hope of remedy, why do you not resolve to separate yourselves from all danger of being lost? Why do you not use all the means in your power to secure for yourselves a happy death? No security can be too great where eternity is at stake.

II. *Imagine to yourselves that you have just now died*, and that your souls have entered into eternity. What would you not wish to have done for life eternal? But alas! such wishes will avail you nothing at the hour of death, if you have not spent the days of your mortal life in serving God! If you would die happy deaths, often fancy yourselves in your graves, or rather on your death-beds; fancy yourselves on the point of breathing your last breath! Listen to the re-

proaches of conscience, and delay not to silence them by a timely repentance. Delay not, for you have no time to lose. St. Camillus de Lellis, looking at the graves of the dead, was accustomed to say : “ If those who are here interred, could now return to life, what would they not do to become Saints ? And I, who have time to my disposal, what do I do for God ? ” Thus, the saint animated himself to become more and more closely united to his Lord. Know, then, that the time which God in his mercy now grants you, is of the greatest value. Employ it well ; and postpone not your repentance until eternity begins to dawn on you,—until the arrival of that awful moment, when it shall be said to you : “ Depart, Christian soul, out of this world ! ” Make haste to go forth, for there is no more time for you to labor ! ”

*Behold, the dying worldling ! See him oppressed with fears and sorrows.* Alas ! he is bathed in a cold sweat ; his breath fails him, and he frequently faints away. Even in his conscious moments his head is so weakened and confused that he understands but little, speaks but little. Worst of all, instead of thinking of the account he must shortly render to God, he thinks only of the doctor, of the remedies that may save him from death. Do those who stand around exhort him to unite himself to God, to make ready for the end ? Far from it. They flatter him by telling him that he is better ; they say not a word that may disturb his fatal delusion. But at last the priest comes, and admonishes him of his approaching dissolution, saying : “ *You are now, my dear brother, in a state of great danger ; you must bid farewell to the world. Give yourself, then, to God, and receive worthily his holy Sacraments.* ” On hearing this fatal announcement, behold the dreadful agitation of the dying man ! What sadness and remorse of conscience overwhelm him, and how terrible is the conflict in his soul ! All the sins he has committed appear confusedly before him ; the inspirations which he has neglected, his broken promises, and the many opportunities of his past life now lost and gone forever,—all rush upon his mind. Now, at last, he opens his eyes to the truths of eternity, of which he has so long made but very little account. O God ! what terror does the thought of *death* and *judgment*, of *hell* and *eternity*, strike into his unhappy soul. The dying sinner exclaims : “ O, what great folly has been mine ! I have squandered away my life ! I might have been a saint, but I would not ; and *now*, what can I do ? My head wanders,—a deadly fear oppresses me, the wild confusion in my brain will not suffer me to fix my thoughts upon anything holy ! In a few moments, what will become of me ? Dying in this manner, how can I be saved ? ” Thus he raves in a sort of despair. He wishes for time to make his peace effectually with God, but time is no longer his. “ Alas ! ” he cries out : “ I begin to lose my sight and breath,—I can no longer move,—I can hardly speak ! ”

And lo ! in the midst of all this confusion, despondency, and fear, his soul departs from his body, and appears before the tribunal of Jesus Christ.

III. *To the just man, death is no punishment*; but rather a reward; he desires rather than dreads it. How can that be dreadful which is to terminate all his pains and afflictions, and all danger of losing God. Those words, "*Depart, Christian soul, out of this world!*" which strike such terror into the soul of the sinner, fill the soul of the just with joy. The latter is not afflicted at leaving *the good things of this world*, because God has always been his *only good*. Neither does he regret leaving *honors*, because he always regarded them as smoke; nor being *separated from his friends and relatives*, because he has always loved them in God and for God. Hence, during his life, he has frequently exclaimed: "My God and my All!"—words which he now repeats in death with ecstasies of delight. The time is at hand for him to return to his God who made him, who redeemed him, who sanctified him,—and with whom he hoped to dwell for ever and ever in heaven. The *sorrows of death* do not afflict him; he even rejoices to sacrifice the last remnants of his life as a testimony of his love for God, uniting his last sufferings to the sufferings of his Redeemer on the cross. Henceforth, there will be no more temptation, no more struggle, no more sin to separate him from God! The devil may strive to make him despond by the recollection of his past sins, but, as he has for many years bewailed them, and has loved Jesus Christ with all his heart, he is not dismayed, but comforted. As the sinner, who dies in mortal sin, experiences in the internal troubles and rage which he suffers, a foretaste of hell, so does the just man experience in death a foretaste of heaven. His acts of confidence and love of God, his ardent desire to see the divine Object of all his affections, afford him a beginning of that happiness, which is soon to be completed for him in heaven.

My beloved, since you are aware that you must die, why do you live as though you were never to die? If, after this life, there were no other life, if there were neither heaven nor hell, could you think less of death than you now do? If you desire to die well, why do you not endeavor to spend the remainder of your days in the continual remembrance of death? Foolish would be that traveller who, on his journey to his own country, would be induced to stop in a foreign city and gamble away the money wherewith he had purposed to provide a home for his old age in his native land. And must you not be thought foolish or mad, who are bent solely on gratifying yourselves in this world, which is only a place of exile, without making any provision for the house of your eternity?

Delay not, then, your conversion ; return at once to the right way. But one thing is necessary,—the salvation of your immortal souls. It is not necessary to be great or rich in this world, but it *is* necessary to save your souls. God has placed us here not to acquire or enjoy riches, honors or pleasures, but to gain by our good works that eternal kingdom which is prepared for his elect. Of what consequence is it, if a man be poor, mean, and despised in this life, provided that, in the end, he dies in the state of grace and secures his salvation ? The more he has been afflicted with tribulations, if he has suffered them with patience, the more will he be glorified in the kingdom of heaven. On the other hand, what does it profit a man to abound in riches and honors, if when he dies he is lost forever ?

Salvation is necessary, because there is no medium. We must either be saved or lost. It will not do to say : “ I shall be satisfied with not going to hell ; I do not aspire to reign with the Saints in heaven ! ” No, it must be either heaven or hell, either happy with God in an ocean of everlasting delights, or for ever trampled upon by merciless devils in an ocean of fire and torments,—either saved or lost,—there is no other alternative. If riches abound, set not your hearts upon them, but make them give place to the riches of eternity. You cannot take a single coin with you, into the grave. Though you were an emperor with hundreds of attendants, your soul will enter into the house of eternity, alone and unattended except by its good or evil works. Woe to us, in that awful hour, if we then discover none but such as render us worthy of everlasting torments ! Amen.



## FEAST OF ALL SAINTS.

## WHAT CONSTITUTES CHRISTIAN HOLINESS.

*"Hope perfectly for that grace. . . . as children of obedience. . . . according to him who is holy, who hath called you ; be you also holy in all conversation."* (Pet. 1 : 13-15.)

It is on the festivals of the Saints, and especially on this present commemoration of all the Saints in heaven, that we are reminded of the fulfilment of the promises of everlasting felicity which those receive who co-operate faithfully with the grace of God. In this, we should find a motive to emulate those holy souls, and an encouragement in the thought that they have given testimony by their lives, that sanctity, far from being impossible, is capable of attainment in every condition of life. A firm will is all that is necessary in order to co-operate with divine grace and become a saint. Therefore, dear Christians, endeavor to walk steadfastly, in the footsteps of your sainted predecessors in the faith. "Hope perfectly for that grace. . . . as children of obedience. . . . according to him who is holy, who hath called you ; be you also holy in all conversation." But in what should this holiness consist ? The sanctity of every Christian must be :

- I. *A holiness of the tongue ;*
- II. *A holiness of the hands ; and*
- III. *A holiness of the heart.*

I. The sanctity of a Christian must be *a holiness of the tongue*. This is proved by the conduct of Christ towards the Pharisees. How assiduously did they not attend in the Temple ! What long prayers did they not say ; how zealous were they not in fulfilling all the ceremonies of the Jewish law ; how exact in their manner of life ! And yet, Jesus rejected all their works ; he called them "hypocrites," "serpents," "a generation of vipers," and he condemned their justice as a false pretence, of which his followers should beware. What was the cause of such scathing reproaches ? This—that these seemingly zealous Pharisees indulged in boastful words, in wicked calumnies, in subtleties and envious murmurs, thus illustrating what St. James afterwards wrote : "If any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is vain." (James 1 : 26.) Ah ! there are many persons who are diligent and

regular in attending church, in receiving the Sacraments, in keeping the appointed fasts, and in giving alms—who, yet, dare to praise God with the same tongue with which they curse their neighbor! They employ that tongue, upon which has rested the sacred Body of Christ, in carrying on improper conversations, or in singing impure songs; they do not hesitate to use that tongue which, in fasting, they have deprived of food and drink, in attacking the good name of their fellow-creature in the most cruel manner; they employ that same member, which confesses Christ to be the Eternal Truth, in uttering injurious falsehoods and calumnies. Their piety is only external, while sin reigns in their hearts; for, “Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh.” (Matth. 12 : 34.)

What must I, then, do (you ask) in order to preserve holiness of the tongue? Exactly that which the Saints did. Your tongue should be employed in instructing the sinful and the erring, in consoling the afflicted; in speaking often of God, and to God; in unceasingly magnifying his glory and praising his mercy; uttering kind, gentle, charitable words,—in always speaking the truth, and avoiding falsehood. This is what is meant by holiness of the tongue, and this is what we must strive after, praying ever with king David: “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; and a door round about my lips!” (Ps. 150 : 3.) Our Lord teaches us the necessity of prudence in speech, when he tells us that we must give an account of every idle word,—how much more, then, of every sinful word!

II. The conduct of Jesus towards the Pharisees serves us again as a lesson on *holiness of the hands*. However plainly the Pharisees' sins were manifested to all, they, nevertheless, endeavored, as far as their pride, or their worldly profit permitted, to defend the faith and practice of their fathers. But what testimony did Jesus bear against them? He declared of them: “They say, and do not.” (Matth. 23 : 3.) See, again, their hypocrisy, their pretended holiness! They dissemble the holiness of the hands, as well as that of the tongue; that is—they do not practise what they preach,—they can produce no holy or pious actions. Jesus, therefore, had good cause to say of them to the people: “All, therefore, whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do; but according to their works, do ye not.” (Matth. 23 : 3.) These words of Christ are as a sentence of condemnation upon all those who are wanting in holiness of hands, that is, in good works. Among this unhappy number must be included all those parents and employers who, although they give their children and dependants good advice, yet render this of no avail, through their bad example. To this number, also, belong those whose mouths are always filled with pious speeches taken from sermons, the lives of the

Saints, or the Bible, but who never put in practice these noble maxims, or who do only as much as is agreeable to their sensuality, or to their temporal advantage. In short, this sentence of Christ condemns all those so-called Christians, whose un-Christian conduct entitles them to be classed among pagans, rather than among Catholics. To them is applicable the expression which Isaac used concerning his son Jacob, whose hands were covered with skins, when he said : "The voice, indeed, is the voice of Jacob ; but the hands are the hands of Esau." (Gen. 27 : 22.) Their speech is Christian, but the works of their hands are heathen.

Therefore, like the Saints, cultivate holiness of the hands. While your words condemn deceit and injustice—let your hands be free from unjustly-acquired possessions. While you profess to hate impurity and indecency—never allow your hands to be stretched forth to seize the victim of your beastly lusts. While you condemn anger and revenge—never withhold your hand in the hour of proffered reconciliation. Praising the benevolence which assists the poor—always keep your hands ready to assist the unfortunate who claim your pity. In fine, if, with your lips you extol the beauty of Christianity, do all that it prescribes, for "Not every one," declares Christ, "that saith to me : Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matth. 7 : 21.)

III. Of *holiness of heart* the Scripture says : "All the glory of the king's daughter" (that is the soul devoted to her King Jesus) "is within." (Ps. 44 : 14.) This holiness of heart consists in nothing else than purity of intention. You may, for example, talk like a pious Christian, and may zealously perform works of piety, but if you are wanting in purity of intention—as the honor of God, the imitation of Jesus, the salvation of your own soul—then, all your words and actions are without merit before God ; "You are like to whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all filthiness." (Matth. 23 : 27.) If you are pious through fear of punishment, from mere habit, in order to obtain a good reputation among the people, or a rich office, or to make a wealthy marriage, or to gain the favor of your superiors ; if you only refrain from sin from want of opportunity, and do not suppress the inclination to sin in your hearts—you may deceive others, and still more yourself, "For man seeth those things that appear ; but the Lord beholdeth the heart ;" (1 Kings 16 : 7 ; ) and "He that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what the Spirit desireth," as St. Paul writes ; (Rom. 8 : 27 ; ) and again : He "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts."

(1 Cor. 4 : 5.) Great will be the multitude in whom on the day of judgment, will be fulfilled these words of the Lord Jesus : "Many will say to me in that day : Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and done many wonderful works in thy name? And then will I profess unto them : I never knew you : depart from me !" (Matth. 7 : 22, 23.) You have visited my churches, prayed, listened to sermons, received the Sacraments, given alms, fasted, avoided enmity ; but, your heart was not holy, it belonged not to me, but to your self-love ; you have received the reward for which you strove ; you have obtained temporal happiness and worldly honors ; therefore, be satisfied, for now, you have nothing more to hope for, because you have labored for time, rather than for eternity, for earth, rather than for heaven ! "*Depart from me !*" O, sad departure, without hope of return !

For this reason, sanctify your works by a good intention, which you must propose to yourself every morning, and frequently renew through the course of the day. Unite your labors to those of Jesus, your sacrifices to his great sacrifice of the cross, and do all things for God's honor, and the salvation of your soul, as St. Paul teaches : "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do ; do all things for the glory of God." (1 Cor. 10 : 31.)

This is the three-fold sanctity of a Christian, after which we must all strive, for it is written : "Be you holy, because I am holy !" Jesus has given us a short compendium of this sanctity in the eight Beatitudes of our present Gospel.

My dear Christians, if you desire the salvation of your souls, practise the virtues mentioned in them, and be holy in your tongues, in your hands, and in your hearts ; then you may hope for the fulfilment of the divine promise of everlasting happiness, before the throne of God, in the blessed company of the Saints for all eternity. Amen.

Bordoni. ,

## ALL SAINTS' DAY.

## THE EASINESS OF SALVATION IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

*"You are a chosen generation, a holy nation."* (1 Pet. 2 : 9.)

If, on this day, we think of the many millions and millions of Saints in heaven, and ask ourselves the question : "Whence came these Saints?" we must give ourselves this two-fold answer : They all came from the Catholic Church, and they came forth from all states of life. They lived and died in the holy Catholic Church ; in her, they served God and led a holy life ; in her, they slept in Christ, and saved their souls. They lived upon earth in the various states, which are still found among men. People of every state of life have attained heaven ; and we may say that there is no earthly vocation that is not represented among the Saints in heaven. What lessons do we deduce from these two truths ?

I. *That we can easily be saved in the Catholic Church ; and*

II. *That as Catholics, we can be saved in any state of life.*

I. Our dear Lord had preached his Gospel for three years and made known the will of his heavenly Father to men. He had instituted the means of grace, the holy Sacraments through which his various graces might be imparted to us ; and, finally, he had died on the cross, and redeemed us from sin and eternal damnation. The day, at length, approached on which he was to finish his mission, and return to his Father. But before his departure, he performed an important work, without which the preaching of the Gospel, the institution of the means of grace, yea, even his death on the cross, would have availed us nothing. This important work was the establishment of his Church, the selection of St. Peter as her Head,—and the delivery of all those powers, faculties, and gifts which he had received from his heavenly Father, to Peter and his other Apostles ; by means of which they apply to us those graces which were acquired by Christ through his bitter Passion and death ; they preach the word of God, rule, and govern the Church,—in a word, conduct the faithful to heaven.

1. Christ established his Church, and made Peter her visible Head in these words : "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock, I will build my church ; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt



bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, shall also be loosed in heaven." (Matt. 16 : 18, 19.) Again he said to Peter : "Feed my lambs. Feed my sheep." (John 21 : 16 : 17.) And to all his Apostles and their successors—since the Church was to exist to the end of time—he gave that power which he had received from his Father, in these words : "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you." (John 20 : 21.) "Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Matt. 28 : 19, 20.) Finally, he promised his Church, perpetuity to the end of time : "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16 : 18.) And that his Church might never err, assured her not only of his own assistance, in these words : "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world," but, also, of the assistance of the Divine Spirit : "The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you." (Matt. 14 : 26.)

2. After having heard that Jesus, the Son of God, established a Church before his departure from this world; that he appointed a Head, for the purpose of ruling and governing his Church; that, in this Church, he gave to his Apostles and their lawful successors all his powers and faculties; that this Church was to last to the end of time, and that she was to be preserved from all error through his and the Holy Ghost's assistance—let us now ask the important question : Which is the Church established by Christ? I answer it is the Catholic Church which alone dates back to her glorious Founder, and can not perish, because the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. It is the Catholic Church, and not a sect established by heretics in the course of time, after the lapse of many centuries. It is the Catholic Church which was governed by Peter in the beginning and afterwards by his lawful successors; it is the Catholic Church, in which all powers and faculties given by Christ to the Apostles, and by the Apostles to their lawful successors, our bishops and priests, were transferred in the Sacrament of Holy Orders. It is the Catholic Church, which has always believed and held all the seven Sacraments instituted by Christ as so many means of grace. It is the Catholic Church, which has preserved the pure doctrine of Jesus Christ, because, under the assistance of Christ and the Holy Ghost, she could not err.

3. Since the Catholic Church is the true Church established by Jesus Christ, it is useless to ask : *Which faith then is the true one?* It is, without doubt, the faith of the Catholic Church, which from the

times of the Apostles up to to-day has been always the same and will always remain the same. The Church is the pillar and the ground of truth which can not waver, because she is always supported and animated by the Spirit of God. Useless, also, is the question : *In which faith can men be saved?* I, yet, will answer those who ask it : "In the true Catholic faith alone." In this true Catholic faith alone, all those millions and millions of Saints in heaven have attained salvation ; and therein we, also, can become Saints, and gain heaven. The Apostle says : "One body, and one spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all." (Ephes. 4 : 4-6.) Not *two* Lords, *two* faiths, *two* Gods ! And the same Apostle says in his Epistle to Timothy : "This I write, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Tim. 3 : 15.) "Outside of the Catholic Church, no one can be saved, for we do not read that any one was saved outside of the ark at the time of the deluge." (St. Fulgentius.) And St. Cyprian writes : "No one who has not the Church for his mother, can have God for his Father." (*De Unitate Ecclesiæ.*)

4. With what certainty, then, dearly beloved, can you work out your salvation in this true Church of Christ in which you live? And I ask further, how easily can you not be saved in her? In this Church you have the true doctrine, the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ, and if you adhere faithfully to it, and believe all that Christ and his Church propose to your belief, already, on account of your faith, you have a sure, well-grounded hope of heaven ; for "he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." (Mark 16 : 16.) And St. John writes : "He that continueth in the doctrine, he hath both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9.) In this, your Church, you are washed from original sin in the bath of regeneration, and cleansed from the curse of God ; and, by virtue of this purification, heaven, which had been closed by original sin, has been again opened to you. Hence, Jesus says : "He that is baptized, shall be saved."—In this Church, you have priests, fortified with the plenitude of power in the Sacrament of Holy Orders, to whom Jesus, in a special manner, gives the power of forgiving sin. "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," says he : "whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." (John 20 : 23.) So that, if you have lost the grace of God and barred heaven against yourselves, you can easily obtain the forgiveness of your sins, and open heaven again to your happy souls. In this Church, you have the Sacrament of Confirmation, in which you receive the Holy Ghost who "endues you with power from on high." (Luke 24 : 49.) In her, you have the Holy Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, through whose worthy reception you obtain eternal life. "He that eateth my flesh, and

drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life ; and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6 : 55.) In her, you have the holy sacrifice of the Mass, through which you receive all graces necessary for a holy life. Through it, the sinner is reconciled with God, the just rendered more just ; merits are increased, vices extinguished, venial sins remitted, and the assaults of Satan frustrated. In the Church you have Extreme Unction, whereby the dying Christian is consoled, strengthened, and sanctified. "And if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." (James 5 : 15.) Yes, still more, as the Council of Trent says : "Not only sins are cleansed away (thereby) but even the remnants of sin." (Sess. 14 : c. 2.)

We may truly say, in this holy Catholic Church the graces of God flow so abundantly, that it is easy for us to save our souls therein. Rejoice, therefore, and give thanks to God that you are members of his true Church, the Church in which all the Saints have sanctified themselves. Should we not be able to do what the Saints did? (St. Augustine.) Yes, we, too, can do what they did, we can do it as members of the holy Catholic Church,

## II. *No matter what may be our state or condition of life.*

1. We often hear people complain that, in their state of life, they can not as easily save their souls as priests, who live entirely for God, or as Religious who without intermission serve God, or holy hermits, recluses, who have entirely renounced the world, and labor solely for heaven in their solitude. My dear Christian, who thus complains, I ask you, can you not easily avail yourself of all those graces, which the Church offers you for your salvation? Can you not keep the faith in your state of life, even though the whole world may try to alienate you from it, and entice you to unbelief? Can you not, with the help of those graces which flow to you from the holy Sacraments, the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and the intercession and prayers of the Saints and of the Church, avoid every sin, and overcome every temptation and allurements? If you have been so unfortunate as to offend God, can you not easily cleanse your soul again by the worthy reception of the Sacrament of Penance ; and, by holy Communion, strengthen yourself against every new sin, and, after your reconciliation, live in the most intimate friendship with God?

2. Does not your state of life really permit you this? Does not your vocation grant you time and opportunity to serve God, and be solicitous for your salvation? If you answer in the negative, I will convince you of your error, by placing before your eyes out of the millions of Saints, whom we honor to-day, one or the other who in your state of life and

in the same circumstances, in which you live, has lived a Christian and holy life, and won the crown of heaven. Let us make the trial.

There is no state of life without its Saints in heaven ;—hence, there is no state of life in which a Catholic Christian can not be saved, nay, can not be *easily* saved if he only faithfully discharges his Christian duties, according to the example of the Saints. There is a way, all we want is the will ; with the grace of God, we can do all things. We can become Saints, because we can live holily ; and we *must* become Saints, because God commands it : “ Be ye holy,” he says : “ as I am holy ; ”—and God commands no impossibility. Therefore, let us not complain, that it is impossible for us to attain heaven in the state in which God has placed us. It may be difficult, but if so, let us remember that the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and that the violent bear it away. Heaven must be won by hard fighting. We must labor for it ; what costs nothing, is worth nothing. Pray and work. If you covet gold, do not dread the digging. If you wish to obtain heaven, pray and work for it. Paradise is not merely a gift of God,—it is a reward of labor. Let us, then, endeavor to serve God in our state to the best of our ability—God requires no more of us—and less will not acquire heaven for us. Let us avoid sin which excludes from heaven ; let us do the will of God and faithfully obey him in all things ; and then, whether we have served him as beggars or kings, we shall surely obtain the crown of life everlasting. Amen.

J. F.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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MAKING READY FOR DEATH.

*“Learn a parable from the fig-tree : when its branch is now tender, and the leaves come forth, you know that summer is nigh.”* (Matth. 24 : 32.)

While the disciples were lost in admiration of the costly splendors of the temple at Jerusalem, our Saviour prophesied to them its destruction. A lesson to us, that, amid the superficial glories of temporal things, we should never lose sight of their transitory nature. O, if we reflected more frequently upon the end of all earthly things, how many of us would be saved from eternal ruin ! Not without reason did Moses wish : “O that they would be wise, and would understand, and would provide for their last end !” (Deut. 32 : 29.) We do not deny that we must all die at some time ; but we always think that death is far away from us, and that we shall have plenty of time to prepare when he begins to draw near to us. In this, we are mistaken. To-day, I propose to show you :

I. *That death is near ; and*

II. *That he will claim you when you least expect it.*

I. It is an important truth which can not be gainsaid :

1. *That death approaches us more closely every hour and every moment ; and*

2. *That he may seize us with every breath that we draw.*

1. “I die daily,” says the Apostle (1 Cor. 15 : 31) ; that is, I am in danger of death every day. “What we call life, is more worthy of the name of death,” says St. Bernard. “This man is dying !” we are accustomed to say, when, from his condition, we judge that death is approaching a sick or suffering person. But are we not all dying from the very first moment of our existence ? The Apostle exclaims : “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?” (Rom. 7 : 24) and St. Augustine, commenting on the text, says : “Why dost thou say : ‘Who shall deliver me ?’ Thou speakest as a mortal, and as one on the point of death. On account of the shortness of life, death is never very far off.” Even the pagans have been enlightened on this point, among whom, the wise Seneca very reasonably says : “We die daily ; daily a part of our life disappears ; so that, even when we are growing,



our life is diminishing ; and at the present hour, death has more than the greater part of it."

2. And what is it to die? Nothing else but to cease to breathe. And how easily may this happen! How many causes may conspire to rob us of the breath of life! "Thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fail, and shall return to their dust." (Ps. 103 : 29.) "And the Lord formed man of the slime of the earth : and breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul." (Gen. 2 : 7.) An instructive lesson on the perishableness of our life, which consists only of a breath. "My spirit shall be wasted ; my days shall be shortened ; and only the grave remaineth for me," says holy Job. (Job 17 : 1.) "Behold now, you who say : To-day, or to-morrow, we will go into such a city . . . For what is your life? It is a vapor which appeareth for a little while, and afterwards, shall vanish away." (James 4 : 13.) "Remember that my life is but wind," confesses Job. And how quickly does not the blast pass by!

II. *Death's coming is always unexpected.* A truth of which we are convinced

1. *By Holy Writ ; and*

2. *By every-day experience.*

1. We know, indeed, and do not attempt to deny that we must, one day, die ; we, also, know that our time of life is short : but we always flatter ourselves that the hour of our death will not be to-day, nor to-morrow—not this week, nor month, nor year. Vain hope ! how dost thou betray those that listen to thee ! How often and emphatically do the Holy Scriptures admonish us : "Watch ye, therefore ; because ye know not the day nor the hour." (Matth. 25 : 13.) "Be you, also, ready ; for at what hour you think not, the Son of man will come." (Luke 12 : 40.) "If a master of a family did know at what hour the thief would come, he would surely watch, and would not suffer his house to be broken open." (Verse 39.) The day of the Lord will not come like ordinary days which are preceded and announced by a dawn, but it will come "like a thief in the night," (2 Thess. 5 : 2) ; that is, unexpected. The bridegroom does not announce his advent as the great ones of this world do, but, unexpectedly a cry arises : "Behold, the bridegroom cometh !" (Matth. 25 : 6.) Woe to you ! if your lamps be not then supplied with the oil of good works !

2. If these paternal admonitions do not render us watchful, at least let the sad examples of every-day life affright us. How many have we not

known who promised themselves long life and gray hairs, who recently sat at the same table with us, or engaged in social amusements and friendly conversation with us, but who are now lying in their graves ! They would not have believed you, if you had said to them, a year, a month, or even a day, before their death : “ My brother, take order with thy house ; for thou shalt die, and not live ! ” (Isai. 38 : 1.) But you tell me that you would sooner have imagined your own death close at hand, than *theirs*. What lesson are you to draw from this ? “ Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day. For his wrath shall come on a sudden ; and in the time of vengeance, he will destroy thee.” (Ecclus. 5 : 8, 9.) “ God has, indeed, promised you,” says St. Augustine, “ that he will pardon your sins, if you return to him, but he has not promised you the coming day. If, instead of God, a fortune-teller has made you this promise, take care lest you and the fortune-teller both eternally perish together.” God in his mercy has hidden from us the hour of our death. The last day of our life is concealed from us, so that we may make good use of every day.

From the leaves and branches of the fig-tree, we know the approach of summer ; and from our own nature, from the divine word, and from innumerable examples, we know that death is nigh, that death will be unexpected. My beloved brethren ! ” He that readeth, let him understand ” (Matth. 24 : 15) ; that is, let him take this lesson to heart. Frequent meditation on death is the best preparation for death. As the Wise Man says : “ In all thy works, remember thy last end ; and thou shalt never sin.” (Ecclus. 7 : 40.) Do not say that the thought of death is too sorrowful and depressing. I grant you that it is to those who are not good, practical Catholics. But what can be more consoling than the thought of a pious and happy death ? By putting aside the thought of death, do you flatter yourself that you will thereby escape it ? Ah ! learn with the Apostle to die in spirit every day, so that, in the end, you may make a happy conclusion to your life. If you die daily, you will not fear death, but rather desire it, exclaiming with St Paul : “ I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ.” Amen.

B.

## TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

## THE TERRORS OF THE LAST JUDGMENT.

*"Then they shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty."* (Matt. 24 : 30.)

It is hard to do well that which can be done but once. We can die but once ; and yet, on that one event depends our happiness or misery for all eternity. Is it not advisable, then, to frequently anticipate during health, the solemn moment, when we shall be summoned away by the angel of Death ? Ah ! yes, it is well to bring before the imagination the various circumstances ordinarily attendant on one's last hour ; to mark the *progress of a mortal illness, the wasting of the body, the decay of the vital powers, reception of the last Sacraments, the agonizing pang of dissolution* ; in fine, to *descend in spirit into the silent tomb, to view the progress of corruption, the crawling worms, the shapeless skeleton, the mouldering dust*. It is appointed for all men to die, and after death, judgment. Like death, judgment is certain, and like it, also, it can neither be tried nor practised beforehand. Its consequences, too, are equally important to every individual, since on its results hangs our eternity of happiness or an eternity of woe. To prepare ourselves, then, for this great assize should be the whole business of life ; hence, it is highly proper and useful to anticipate, by the help of imagination, the part which we shall most certainly have to act at that awful hour ; and to consider attentively the details of the dreadful scene, which will then be opened upon us. This I propose this day to do. I will not delay in describing the fearful signs and prognostics, that are to precede that Day of Wrath, nor the thrilling trumpet, which shall be heard to the utmost verge of the region of death, to arouse all from first to last of its countless inhabitants ;—but will commence where all the children of Adam being assembled in the Valley of Josaphat, shall wait to hear their final doom. Remember, my dearly beloved, that the event, which you are now considering is one in which *you yourselves* must share ; that your own eyes, those very eyes which now meet mine in earnest attention, shall behold the various features of that terrible scene—in a word that you yourself, and not another, are destined to be the criminal at the bar. Consider then with me this morning

- I. *The character of the Judge ;*
- II. *The number and weight of the witnesses against you ;*

III. *The nature of the Law whereby you will be tried ; and*

IV. *The importance and irrevocability of your final sentence.*

To begin with,—your Judge is

1. *The Omniscient;*
2. *The Just; and*
3. *The Omnipotent God,*

Charged with avenging the injuries which he has received at the hand of his own creatures.

1. *An Omniscient God.* A God whose searching eye takes in, at one glance, the whole compass of creation, pierces the heavens and the earth, and penetrates the lowest caverns of hell. A God to whom their is neither past nor future ; to whom the events of the most remote by-gone ages, as well as those that are to come, are all actually present ; to whom a thousand years are as yesterday, and whose thoughts are from generation to generation. In an earthly court, the criminal may often indulge a hope that, in the course of the proceedings, he may by artifice or effrontery, conceal, if not the whole, at least a part of his guilt ; what he can not deny, he may palliate or excuse ; and to a mortal judge, innocence of intention may be, and is often falsely, ad-duced, to lessen the criminality of the action. Before this Judge of infinite knowledge, however, the possibility of concealment or decep-tion will be altogether precluded ; to him the most open action is not more clear than the most occult intention. His penetrating eye has all along beheld those secret springs of action, which the sinner has thought to wrap in impenetrable obscurity. He has witnessed the first ambiguous leanings of his heart to temptation, has traced it through its subsequent, and almost imperceptible, degrees of guilt ; has marked the moment when complacency gave way to delectation, delectation to consent, consent to gratification. Every minute, every complicated circumstance of time, of place, of person, of means, of consequence, is open and unraveled before him ; nothing is forgotten, nothing altered, nothing disguised.

2. *He is a just God.* A God not now sighing out the tender wailings of commiseration over an impenitent Jerusalem, nor shedding the last drop of his blood to redeem offending men, but a God bound by the laws of his own eternal justice to avenge upon the sinner the blood which he has shed for him in vain. At present, we behold the wicked often sharing equally with the righteous, the goods and blessings of life ; the attribute of justice seems to be forgotten and only that of mercy exercised. In the Last Day, however, mercy shall give way to

justice, and *what a justice*? Not one which may be eluded by fraud, or prevented by force; which often fails to distinguish between the innocent and the guilty; and which, to save the former, must frequently be contented to let the latter go unpunished; but a justice that will tear away the mask, which has so long concealed the sinner from others, and from himself; which shall accurately distinguish between genuine and counterfeit virtue, between the action and intention, between the work which is done for God, and that which is done for the world.

3. *He is an omnipotent God.* With God to will and to perform, are one and the same; and as before an all-wise God, there is no deception, before an all-just God no appeal, so before an omnipotent God there is no escape or resistance. Such is the Being who is to preside at this last assize, such the Judge, before whom all who are present here, each one of you who now listen to me as well as I who speak, must, on that day, stand. Our friends and relations are, one after the other, quietly descending into the tomb, where they await in silence the awful summons that is to call them to the final judgment. We, too, must soon follow them. *Then* it will seem as though but a brief moment had elapsed ere the trumpet sounds, and the dread prediction is verified by the awful reality.

II. In the next place, let us consider the *spectators*, the *witnesses*, of the trial. It is the collective assemblage of all the rational creatures, whom God has made—the united myriads of heaven, earth, and hell. *Heaven* shall send forth her nine choirs of Angels and the whole heavenly hierarchy; *earth* shall add to the number all the children of Adam without exception, from the first to the last; whilst *hell* shall yield up its infernal host—Lucifer and all his associates. To confine our imagination (which is lost and bewildered in the contemplation of so vast a multitude) to the second of the vast armies, we there see collected the successive generations of all the nations, which the sun illumines in his daily course, men of all times, of all ranks, of all ages,—the master and the slave, the king and the subject, the antediluvian and the modern—all without badge, without title, bereft now of all those vain marks and distinctions, wherewith genius, birth, fortune, or accident had hitherto invested them. Here, the mighty conqueror of half the globe is undistinguished from the last of his followers; here, the proud genius, the renowned statesman, the resistless potentate, stands among the immense multitude unsought, unrespected, unattended. In the sight of that mighty throng each one of us must, one day, stand. Before its all-attentive gaze, the secrets of each heart, of each conscience, will be laid open. In the very presence



of our most intimate acquaintances and associates, shall the humiliating scrutiny be made. They shall all behold us, not as now, when our exterior actions are the only criterion for their interior judgment of us, but such as we really are. The thick veil, with which our pride and self-love had, during life, so studiously concealed the dark side of our character from the eyes of others and often from our own, shall then be torn away. That *dark suspicion*, which we had never trusted beyond the confines of our own breast, shall then be made known to the very person who was its object. *The secret envy*, the *concealed aversion*, the *detracting whisper*, which, perhaps, was indulged under the external show of friendship and cordiality,—shall, *then*, be revealed to the eye of day. Then, too, shall be laid open all those *secret springs of action*, the *guilty passions*, by which we were impelled, but which we were unwilling to acknowledge,—those filthy *lusts* which we glossed over as little follies and youthful indiscretions; that *avarice* which closed the hand of charity, and which we had lightly termed prudence and economy. What then will be your feelings, when all your secret delinquencies shall be exposed to the eye of the universe, when every hidden thought, every illicit emotion, shall be presented to public view?

III. The next circumstance, which merits our consideration in this terrible assize is the *law* by which we are to be tried. To the law, in every just court (when the evidence against the accused has been clearly established), must the final appeal be made. By it must the guilt or innocence of the party be ascertained; his acquittal or condemnation, as well as the measure of his punishment, be determined. Hence, before human tribunals, the principal object of the counsel for the accused is to prevent the law from taking effect, to embarrass its application, to explain away its meaning, to prove it unknown, unjust, impracticable, or obsolete. This we often behold effected; and in an earthly court, the criminal not unfrequently escapes the hand of justice, because the provisions of the law are inadequate, its meaning obscure, its expediency dubious. Nothing of all this can possibly occur with relation to that divine law by which we are to be tried on the awful day of Judgment. It is the law of God himself; it was inscribed by the same hand, which is now ready to punish its non-observance. Here is no false interpretation, no forced privilege, no favored prescription. It is a law perpetually holy, perpetually just, perpetually binding. A law equally established for the rich and for the poor, for the mighty and for the weak, for the learned and for the ignorant. A law, the provisions of which comprise all times, all persons, all circumstances, all events. From its authority, we can plead no exemption; in baptism, we subscribed to its regulations, we engaged to

observe its precepts, to conform our life to its maxims, and to abide by its decisions. Of its prohibitions and ordinances, we can plead no ignorance : ignorance, in an affair, which we knew to be of such vital importance, and with the means of instruction continually before us, can only serve to blacken our guilt.

During this life, indeed, the tepid and negligent Christian thinks to palliate or justify his disregard of the law of God by a thousand vain allegations and pretexts. Its sacred prohibitions are made light of, sometimes, despised and ridiculed. But on *that* day not a single syllable of God's sacred code shall be suffered to become void. Then shall all the false and flattering interpretations of the precepts of the Gospel, that feigned inability, those pretended exemptions, by which the sinner had during life succeeded in quieting the alarms of his conscience, be exposed and dissipated.

IV. I now come to the last circumstance in this momentous trial, which, exclusive of every other, will be alone sufficient to impart the most intense interest to all and each of its proceedings. I mean *the pronouncing of the sentence*. What this is to be, the mouth of truth itself has briefly informed us. "*Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!*" or : "*Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which is prepared for the devil and his associates!*" To hear one of these sentences must be the lot of every individual of the human race ; it must be the lot of every one here present. *Let us then consider ourselves as standing before the awful throne, awaiting the decision of our irrevocable destiny.* Alas ! how shall I anticipate, how shall I describe your feelings at that terrible moment ? Erroneous, indeed, would be the simile which would compare them to those of any earthly experience ! Even when you are told, that the moment you are contemplating is one by which heaven and hell, an eternity of happiness or an eternity of woe, is to be unalterably fixed, the idea which you form is far from being adequate to its supreme importance. Common as are the terms, their import is unfathomable to mortal understanding. In our present state, we have not known, and we can not know, what it is *to lose heaven*, what it is *to be condemned to hell!* The temporal images from which we borrow our conceptions, can at best but give us a very imperfect notion of the joys of the one or of the sufferings of the other. The powers of the human mind are inadequate to measure the vast series of eternal years, and when put to their utmost stretch, they inadvertently fall back into the computations of time. Far different our situation, when we shall be expecting to hear that last sentence ! Then, endowed with quite other powers of perception, we shall fully see what is lost by losing heaven, what is incurred by being condemned to hell ! Then, and then

alone, we shall clearly and thoroughly know the import of that most awful of all words : ETERNITY!

My dear friends, this is no ideal scene. It is a dread reality. The points on which the fateful Trial turns, are not difficult questions of morality and doctrine ; they are not such as only concern a small portion of mankind ; they are nothing more or less than the common duties of life. *How far are we, individually speaking, prepared to meet this searching investigation?* To this question, not I, but your own consciences, your past, your present life, must make the important answer. One reflection, however, there is which I wish to make before I quit this awful subject : It is that, judging by experience and the ordinary rules of Providence, the sentence that would now be passed upon you, were you this instant to be summoned to the bar of divine Justice, is the same that will be uttered at the Last Day. Does this assertion excite your surprise ? But the small number of those who, in the midst of a life of tepidity and sin, are really and sincerely converted, fully testifies to this truth. I deny not, indeed, that it is a rule to which exceptions may be found ; but they are rare.

If, therefore, upon a review of your life, you find reason to tremble for the result of a trial that should at this moment be commenced, think not that you will alter your destiny by a few vain and transient desires of conversion, by restraining yourself from grosser and more flagrant excesses, while you continue enslaved to the same indifference and tepidity in the service of God, while the same coldness of charity towards your neighbor chills your heart, while the same abuse of divine grace, and the same love of the world which, at present, would render your case hopeless, continue in your soul. No, the very fact that your past life has been a life of guilt, renders it more than dubious that without the greatest sacrifices and the greatest exertions you will ever be converted. Fear not the judgment, but rather fear that by which alone, the judgment is rendered terrible. Frequently approach in imagination to the dread tribunal. Weigh, and examine your actions by its decisions. There will you be undeceived as to all the vain and false judgments of men ; there will you learn daily to appreciate in time, that which alone can render you happy in eternity. Amen.

Adapted from "The Pulpit."



# FIVE LECTURES.

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## LECTURE I.

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### THE BIBLE.

*“One of them, a doctor of the law, asks him, tempting him : Which is the great commandment in the law ?”*

Every Israelite was anxious to know and understand the writings of Moses and the prophets. The Lord God had given them this command : “Lay up these my words in your hearts and minds, and hang them for a sign on your hands, and place them between your eyes ; teach your children that they meditate on them” (Deut. 11 : 18) ; and there were teachers appointed whose duty it was to interpret the Scriptures to the people. Even as every one is not allowed to understand and interpret the laws of the state of . . . . according to his own notion and fancy, so, not every one is capable of understanding and interpreting the Bible. We often hear the shibboleth : “The Bible, and the Bible alone, must be our guide !” Why then do our dissenting brethren go to the useless expense of building fine churches ? Why should Protestant ministers preach sermons and catechise the young in their Sunday schools, if the Bible at home be a sufficient guide for the people ? Why do they contradict in practice what they so vehemently advance in theory ? They need not tell me that the Bible is all-sufficient ; for if they believe so, why do they stand between the people and the Scriptures, giving their own private interpretation of it ? Are they infallible ? No man can be certain that his own private judgment is true, unless he proudly and presumptuously supposes himself to be infallible. At the same time, the mere reading of the Bible will not suffice to save us ; we must also



practise what we read. But let us ask ourselves the question :

1. Does God command us to read the Bible, and does he threaten us with damnation, if we refuse to read the Bible ?

2. Are Catholics forbidden by the Church to read the Bible ?

Protestants are very fond of quoting that passage in the Gospel of St. John (5 : 39) wherein Christ said to the Jews (who, the Evangelist declares, were then persecuting him): "Search the Scriptures"; and they maintain that our Lord, in these words, gives an express command to all men, young and old, high and low, wise and ignorant, to search the Scriptures; and, consequently, to judge for themselves of the sacred Text; to form their own creed, to believe or disbelieve whatever they may think proper. The fatal consequences of such a course are so obvious, that no prudent man can help doubting if the Divine Wisdom ever gave such a command. But there it is, they say, plainly written in the Scriptures. Yes, it is written there; and I have particularly examined the passage. Now, be it known that the original of St. John's Gospel was written in Greek. In the Greek, the verb, "Search"—*Scrutamini*, is the same in the indicative as in the imperative mood. At the time when Christ gave utterance to the words: "Search the Scriptures," he was sharply rebuking the unbelief and stubborn blindness of the Jews, saying: "And you have not his word abiding in you; for whom he hath sent, him you believe not;" and then he adds: "Search," or "*You search the Scriptures, for you think in them to have life everlasting, and the same are they that give testimony of me. And you will not come to me, that you may have life.*" Far from commanding all men to read the Scriptures, our Lord was really reproaching the Pharisees with the fact that, they, like many a good Protestant of to-day, were continually reading the Bible, thinking to find salvation thereby, while, all the while, they were refusing to accept the Divine Truth of which it gave testimony.

"What?" will Bible readers exclaim, "Do you deny that a man who searches the Scriptures with a sincere heart will find therein eternal life?" It is not for me to judge the sincerity of any man's heart, nor to set limits to the mercy of God. I am only contending that to search the Scriptures, in the Protestant sense, is not only no commandment of God, but is further attended with very fatal consequences. Daily ex-

perience sufficiently proves this statement. Are not thousands continually searching the Scriptures,—ever seeking, and never attaining to, the knowledge of the truth? But let us, for the sake of argument, suppose the Protestant version is right. Even if “Search the Scriptures” be an imperative command, I cannot see that Christ addressed it to all men, to all Christians.

On the occasion in question, he was addressing his enemies, not his Apostles and disciples. To the latter, and to all Christians, he speaks quite a different language: “Go, teach all nations.” “He who hears you, hears me.” “If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican.”

Moreover, in saying “Search the Scriptures,” &c., Christ only addressed the wise men of the Jews, the Scribes and Pharisees. The common people, like the great mass of Christians for many centuries, did not know how to read, and, therefore, could not search the Scriptures. As a further proof that it was to the learned Jews he spoke, we hear them deriding the Man whom they thought to be merely the son of the humble mechanic, Joseph, saying: “How does this man know letters, having never learned?” (St. John 7: 15.)

Again: Jesus himself never wrote a single line of Scripture. He never once commanded his Apostles to write a word, or even to circulate the Scriptures already existing. When he sent them upon their Apostolic errand, he said, “Go, teach all nations. Preach the Gospel to every creature!” Of the twelve Apostles and the seventy-two disciples, who were the personal companions or early followers of our Lord, *only eight* have left us any sacred writings or records. And the Epistles and the Gospels were addressed by their authors to particular persons or particular churches. They were written on some special emergency, just as a Bishop issues a Pastoral letter to correct certain abuses which may have sprung up in the Church, or to lay down certain rules of conduct for the faithful. The Apostles are never reported to have circulated a single volume of Holy Scripture, but “they going forth preached every where, the Lord co-operating with them, and confirming the word with the signs that followed.” (Mark 16: 20.) Had Christ intended that the world should learn his doctrine from a book, he would have written the book himself in a plain, easy style, intelligible

to the meanest capacity. Instead of sending his Apostles to teach and to preach, he would give them the commission to teach the ignorant their A, B, C, and when they had learned to read, to put this divine book into their hands, and leave them to themselves. Then, we should have read in the Acts of the Apostles and in their Epistles, splendid examples of their zeal and exertions in establishing every where free-schools and Bible-societies. Unfortunately, we find nothing of all this in our present Bible. Nay, more, Christ should have instructed his Apostles in the useful art of paper-making ; and, above all, he should have revealed to them the powerful engine of the printing press ; because the demand for Bibles would have been so great, that without these two great discoveries, it would have been impossible to furnish a sufficient supply. He should have left an authentic copy of this divine work in every language then existing or that should exist to the end of time, and not trusted to the ignorance and malice of translators to impose upon the credulous their own productions for the word of God. He should have initiated his Apostles into the art of making steamers and steam-cars whereby Bibles might be transmitted to all parts of the known and unknown world.

But the ways of God are different from the ways of man. A competent guide, such as our Lord intended for us, must have three characteristics.

1. It must be within the reach of every one ;
2. It must be clear and intelligible to every one ; and
3. It must be able to satisfy us on all questions relating to faith and morals.

1. "God wishes all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth ;" hence he must have placed within the reach of every one the means of arriving at the truth. Now, it is clear that the Scriptures could not at any period have been accessible to every one. They could not have been accessible to the primitive Christians, because they were not all written for a long time after the establishment of Christianity. The Christian religion was founded in the year of our Lord, 33. St. Matthew's Gospel, the first part of the New Testament ever written,

did not appear till *eight years* after. The Church was established about *twenty years*, when St. Luke wrote his Gospel. And St. John's Gospel did not come to light till towards the end of the first century. For many years after the Gospels and Epistles were written, the knowledge of them was confined to the churches to which they were addressed. It was not till the close of the fourth century (392) that the Church framed her canon of Scriptures, and declared the Bible, as we now profess it, to be the genuine Word of God. The golden age of Christianity was that of the first three or four centuries. The most perfect Christians, therefore, lived and died and went to heaven, before the most important parts of the Scripture were written. It cannot, therefore, be a commandment of God to read the Bible ; and a man can be saved without reading the Bible.

Again ; the art of printing was not invented till the 15th century (1440). How utterly impossible it was to supply every one with a copy of the Scriptures from the 4th to the 15th century ! During that long period, Bibles had to be copied with the pen. There were but a few hundred of them in the world, and these were in the hands of the clergy and the learned. According to the Protestant system, *the art of printing* would have been much more necessary to the Apostles than the gift of tongues. It was well for Luther that he did not come into the world until a century after the immortal discovery of Guttenberg. A hundred years earlier, his idea of 250,000,000 of men reading the Bible would have been received with shouts of laughter, and would surely have caused his removal from the pulpit of Wittemberg to a hospital for the insane.

But even *if the Bible were at all times accessible to every one*, how many millions exist in every age and country, not excepting our own age of boasted enlightenment, to whom the Bible is not accessible, because they are incapable of reading the word of God. Hence, the doctrine of private interpretation would render many men's salvation not only difficult but impossible.

2. A competent, religious guide must be clear and intelligible to all, so that every one may fully understand the true meaning of its instructions. Is the Bible a book intelligible to all ? Far from it ; it is

full of obscurities and difficulties not only for the illiterate, but also for the learned. St. Peter informs us that in the Epistles of St. Paul there "are certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction." After this, Protestant missionaries may go and spread their Bibles throughout the world, put a copy into every work-shop and every hovel, and tell the gulled and gaping multitude, that they will find therein life everlasting. From my soul, I pity them ; I pity such folly and blindness,—convinced as I am, that ninety-nine out of every hundred are either unlearned or unstable, and therefore must meet with their own destruction.

We read in the Acts of the Apostles, that a certain man was riding in his chariot, reading the book of Isaiah ; and, being asked by St. Philip whether he understood the meaning of the prophecy, he replied : "How can I understand, unless some man show me?" admitting by these modest words, that he did not pretend of himself to interpret the Scriptures.

The Fathers of the Church, though many of them spent their whole lives in the study of the Sacred Books, are unanimous in pronouncing the Bible "a book full of knotty difficulties." And yet we find, in our own days, men quitting the loom and the anvil, and with all self-sufficiency mounting the pulpit to explain to the stupid crowd the profound mysteries of revelation. We find men with a mere smattering of biblical knowledge, who see no obscurity at all in the Word of God and who presume to expound it from Genesis to Apocalypse.

"Fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

Does not the conduct of the Reformers conclusively show the utter folly of interpreting the Scriptures by private judgment ? As soon as they rejected the oracle of the Church, and set up their own private lights as the highest standard of authority, they could hardly agree among themselves on the meaning of a single important text. The bible became in their hands a complete Babel. The sons of Noe attempted in their pride to ascend to heaven by building the tower of Babel, and



their scheme ended in the confusion and multiplication of tongues. The children of the Reformation endeavored in their conceit to lead men to heaven by the private interpretation of the Bible, and their efforts led to the confusion and multiplication of religions. Let me give you one example out of a thousand. These words of the Gospel : "*This is my body*" (Matt. 26 : 26), were understood only in *one* sense before the Reformation. The Reformers of the 16th century gave no fewer than *eighty* different meanings to these few, simple words ; and since their time, the number of interpretation has increased to over a hundred !

No one will deny that in our days there exists a vast multitude of sects, which are daily multiplying. No one will deny that this multiplying of creeds is a crying scandal, and a great stumbling-block in the way of the conversion of heathen nations. No one can deny that these divisions in the Christian family are traceable to the assumption of the right of private judgment. Every new-fledged divine with a superficial education, imagines that he has received a call from heaven to inaugurate a new religion ; and he is ambitious of handing down his fame to posterity by stamping his name on a new sect. And every one of these champions of modern creeds, appeals to the unchanging Bible in support of his ever-changing doctrines.

Thus, one body of Christians will prove from the Bible that there is but one person in God, while the rest will prove from the same Bible that there are three persons in God. One will prove from the Bible that Jesus Christ is not God. Others will appeal to the same Bible to prove his divinity. One denomination will assert, on the authority of Scripture, that infant baptism is not necessary for salvation ; while others will hold that it is. Some Christians, with Bible in hand, will teach that there are no Sacraments. Others will say that there are only two. Some will declare that the Bible does not preach a hell ; others will say that the Bible distinctly vindicates that dogma. Do not clergymen appear every day in the pulpit, and on the authority of the Book of Revelations point out to us, with painful accuracy, the year and day on which this world is to come to an end ? And when their prophecy fails of execution, they coolly put off our destruction to another time. Very recently, several hundred Mormon women presented a petition to

the government at Washington protesting against any interference with their abominable system of polygamy, insisting that their cherished system is sustained by the Word of God, the Bible. Such is the legitimate fruit, such are the fatal consequences of private interpretation. Would it not be extremely hazardous to make a long voyage in a ship where all the officers and crew were fiercely contending among themselves as to the management of the compass and the mode of steering their course? How much more dangerous is it to trust to contending captains in the journey to heaven! Nothing short of an infallible authority should satisfy you, when it is a question of steering your course to eternity. On this vital question, there should be no conflict of opinion among those that guide you. There should be no conjecture. There must always be some one at the helm whose voice gives assurance amid the fiercest storms, that all is well.

A competent guide to heaven must be able to instruct in all the truths necessary to salvation. Now the Scriptures *do not* contain all the truths which a Christian is bound to believe; neither do they explicitly enjoin all the duties which he is to practise. Not to mention other examples, is not every Christian obliged to sanctify the Sunday, and to abstain on that day from all unnecessary servile work? But you may read the Bible from beginning to the end, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of the Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify.

The Catholic Church correctly teaches that our Lord and his Apostles inculcated certain important duties which are not recorded by the inspired writers. "But there are also many other things, which Jesus did, which if they were written, every one, the world itself, I think would not be able to contain the books that should be written. (St. John 21 : 25.) St. Paul in his 2nd Epistle to the Thessalonians, says: "Therefore, brethren, stand firm, and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word or by our epistle."

We must therefore conclude that the Scriptures alone cannot be a sufficient guide and rule of faith; because they could not, at any time be within the reach of every inquirer; because they are not of them-

selves clear and intelligible even in matters of the highest importance ; and because they do not contain all the truths necessary to salvation. In short, it is clear, that it is not a commandment of God to read the Bible, or in other words, that a man can be saved without reading the Bible.

II. God forbid, that any of my hearers should be tempted to conclude from what I have said that the Catholic Church is opposed to the reading of the Scriptures, or that she is the enemy of the Bible. The Catholic Church, the enemy of the Bible ! Good God, what monstrous ingratitude, what base calumny is contained in that assertion ! As well might you accuse the Virgin Mother of trying to crush the Infant Saviour at her breast, as to accuse the Church our Mother, of attempting to crush out the existence of the Word of God ! For fifteen centuries the Church was the sole guardian and depository of the Bible ; and if she really had feared that sacred book, what was to prevent her, during that long period from tearing it to shreds, and scattering it to the winds ? She could have thrown it into the sea,—as the unnatural mother would throw away her off-spring,—and who would have been the wiser for it ?

What has become of those millions of once famous books which were written in past ages ? They have nearly all perished. But amid this wreck of ancient literature, the Bible stands almost a solitary monument, like the Pyramids of Egypt amid the surrounding wastes. That venerable Volume has survived the wars, the revolutions, the barbaric invasions of fifteen centuries. Who rescued it from destruction ? The Catholic Church. But little do we imagine in our age of steam-printing how much labor it cost the Catholic Church to preserve and perpetuate these sacred Scriptures. Learned monks, who are now abused in their graves by thoughtless men, were constantly employed in copying with the pen the holy Bible. When one monk died at his post, another took his place, watching like a faithful sentinel over the treasure of God's word.

Let me give you a few plain facts, to show the pains which the Church has taken to perpetuate the Bible. The Canon of the Bible (as I have told you), was framed in the fourth century. In the same century,

Pope Damasus commanded a new and complete translation of the Scriptures to be made into the Latin language, which was then the living tongue, not only of Rome and Italy, but of the civilized world. If the Popes were afraid that the Bible should see the light, this was a singular way of manifesting their fear. The task of preparing a new edition of the Scriptures was assigned to St. Jerome, the most learned Hebrew scholar of his time. This new translation was disseminated throughout Christendom, and on that account, was called the Vulgate or popular edition.

In the sixth and seventh centuries, the modern languages of Europe began to spring up, like so many shoots, from the parent Latin stock. The Scriptures soon found their way into these languages. The Venerable Bede, who lived in England in the eighth century, translated the Bible into Saxon, which was then the language of England. He died while dictating the last verses of St. John's Gospel.

Printing was invented in the fifteenth century ; and almost a hundred years later, came the so-called Reformation. It is often triumphantly said, and I suppose there are some who, even at the present day, are ignorant enough to believe the assertion, that the first edition of the Bible ever published after the invention of printing, was the edition of Martin Luther. The fact is, that before Martin Luther put his pen to paper, no fewer than fifty-six editions of the Bible had appeared on the continent of Europe, not to speak of those printed in Great Britain ! Of those editions twenty-one were published in German, one in Spanish, four in French, twenty-one in Italian, five in Flemish, and four in Bohemian.

Coming down to our own times, if you open an English Catholic Bible, you will find in the preface a letter of Pope Pius VI., in which he strongly recommends the pious reading of the Holy Scriptures. A Pope's letter is the most weighty authority in the Church. You will also find in Haydock's Bible, the letters of the Bishops of the United States, in which they express the hope that this splendid edition would have a wide circulation among their flocks. These facts ought, I think, to convince every candid mind that the Catholic Church, far from being opposed to the reading of the Scriptures, does all she can to encourage their perusal.

Every Catholic priest is obliged in conscience to devote upwards of an hour, each day, to the perusal of the Word of God. I am not aware that clergymen of other denominations are bound by the same duty.

What is good for the clergy, must be good also for the laity. Protestants may be assured, that if, by the grace of God, they become Catholics, they will never be forbidden to read the Bible. It is my earnest wish that every word of the Gospel may be imprinted on your memory and in your hearts.

Adapted from "Faith of our Fathers."



## LECTURE II.

## PAPAL INFALLIBILITY.

*"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church . . . .  
And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven."* (Matt. 18 :  
18, 19.)

In the fulness of time, Christ came to establish his Church. This is an undisputed, historical fact. The Church of Christ was to embrace all nations for all time to come. "Go ye into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16 : 15.) "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Mt. 28 : 20.) The East and West, the North and South—all quarters of the globe—were to accept his doctrine under the penalty of eternal damnation. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." (Hebr. 11 : 6.) "He that believeth not, shall be condemned." (Mark 16 : 16.) "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Matt. 28 : 20.) What follows from this ?

1. *That all men must believe ;*
2. *That they must believe what Christ has commanded, no more and no less ; and*
3. *That they must believe under the penalty of eternal damnation.*

Now, to bring all men under the dominion of faith, yes, under the dominion of the same faith, some religious system, some concert of action, some form of government was required ; hence, Christ chose his twelve Apostles who were clothed with the teaching and governing power : "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations." (Mt. 28 : 19.) "He that heareth you, heareth me : and he that despiseth you, despiseth me." (Luke 10 : 16.)—But every institution, be it ever so small, must

have a head. What would a literary society be without a president, a political meeting without a chairman, a town without a marshal, a city without a mayor, or a state without a governor ?

Yes, that the Apostolic College had a president, is not only reasonable and natural, but also scriptural. In the tenth chapter and second verse of St. Matthew, we read : "Now, the names of the twelve Apostles are these : The first, Simon, who is called Peter." Why is Peter called the "First" ? Is it because he was the oldest among the twelve ? No. Is it because he was the first one chosen ? Indeed not. His elder brother was called before him. Now, if St. Peter was not "first" in age, nor "first" in our Saviour's choice, he must have been "first" in authority. Practically, Peter's superiority is admitted by the other Apostles. Look at them assembled in the council of Jerusalem. Who is acting as chairman ? Whose decision is final ? St. Peter's. And who are "holding their peace" ? The other Apostles.

As to Papal infallibility proper, I will shortly bring more scriptural proofs. In the meanwhile, let this suffice. It is then natural, reasonable, and scriptural, that the Church, whose children are spread over the face of the earth, should have a "Papa," a Pope, a head chairman, or president.

Furthermore, it is not only scriptural, but also reasonable, that the Church, established by Christ, should be infallible ; that is, she should be able to hand down to the end of the world, without loss and without corruption, the truths revealed by him. Could Christ make her so ? This is beyond all question. He is God. It is a poor contractor who cannot make his work stand. Would he do it ? Why not ? He certainly loved her. He sealed the foundations of his Church with the life-blood of his heart. What do you think of a man who builds a house at an enormous expense and then neglects to look after it ? It certainly betrays weakness. Did he do it ? At least, he says so himself. "Upon this rock I will build my Church : and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16 : 18.) "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Matt. 28 : 20.) Think of Christ, who is truth and sanctity itself, being with a false, a corrupt Church ? It is blasphemous. Could God bind me to believe under the penalty

of eternal damnation without giving me the full assurance, that the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, is proposed to my belief? "He that believeth not shall be damned." That would be unreasonable; hence, the Church of Christ must be infallible.

Where is the seat of infallibility? Naturally we look for it in the head of the Church. Many non-Catholics speak against Papal Infallibility, but we rarely meet one knowing the precise meaning of the term. To be open and frank with you, I have the first one to meet yet. Some confound infallibility with impeccability. Catholics, they say, believe the Pope sinless. We believe nothing of the kind. On the contrary, we believe that the lives of a few Popes have been very disedifying; that the Pope in his non-official capacity is just as liable to err as I or you. Yes, I am willing to admit that he does fall, and falls daily. He himself admits it; and for this reason he goes to confession as well as you and I. Behold him at the altar; he too strikes his breast, saying: "Mea culpa," through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault. Infallibility does not mean impeccability.

Others look upon infallibility as an assumption of heavenly inspiration. This is another misconception. No new doctrines are revealed to the Pope. He is only the guardian of those revealed by Christ. Whenever a difficulty arises, he merely decides what is in accordance with divine revelation, and what is not.

Should the Pope write a book on questions purely scientific or political, I claim the right of criticising it from cover to cover. Yes, should he come and preach a sermon for the people of this town—should he, I say, preach on some open question, on some subject as yet undecided for the whole Church, I reserve to myself the right of criticising not only his language and his gestures, but also what he says. I can do all this, and still be a first-class Catholic.

Well, then, if the Pope is not always infallible in word or pen, when is he infallible? The Pope is infallible when he speaks *ex cathedra*—that is, when, in his official capacity, as head of the Church and representative of Jesus Christ, he defines, concerning faith and morals, something binding on the universal Church. Three things, then, constitute infallibility.

1. *The Pope must speak in his official capacity ;*
2. *His decision must touch faith and morals ;*
3. *His decision must be for the whole Church.*

Let me make this clear by an example. Suppose it were not yet defined whether Baptism is essential to salvation or not. Some Catholics hold that it is ; whereas others hold just the reverse. They enjoy this privilege until a decision is given. But to settle the matter, and to quiet the minds of the people, the Pope, as successor to St. Peter, as head of the Church, in his official capacity, announces to the universal Church : "I do hold and declare it to be a revealed truth that Baptism is essential to salvation." In this case the Pope would be infallible ; and every Catholic in the world would have to submit to his decision.

Now, what do the Scriptures say in support of the doctrine of infallibility ? In St. Matthew we read : "*Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" (Matt. 18 : 18.) In the original language, the text reads thus : "Simon, thou art a rock," &c. Evidently, Simon was not, literally speaking, a rock. Consequently, Christ spoke figuratively. But rock is a figure of solidity, strength, and immovability. If a house is built upon a rock, we say it has a solid foundation, a foundation that will not give way. Hence, by way of explanation, Christ himself says : "And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." With what consistency could the Saviour have used this language if Peter, the Rock, would have been shaken, like a reed, by every "wind of doctrine," and washed away, like sand, by every little billow ?

You may say, my Protestant friend, "that Peter's profession of belief in the Lord Jesus is the Rock in question." In the first place, what gives your explanation more weight than mine ? In the second place, speaking from a Protestant stand-point, have I not as much right to my view of it as you to yours ? Finally, remember that you put bad grammar into the mouth of our Saviour. What reason have you to suppose him unacquainted with the ordinary rules of grammar ? You will admit that when two things are spoken of, "this" refers to something close at hand, whereas "that" refers to something more or less at a distance.

In the text before us, we find, that Christ, instead of using, as a good grammarian would, this language : "Thou art Simon, and upon *that* rock (your profession) I will build my church," on the contrary, says : "Thou art *Peter*" (changing the Apostle's name, on the instant, from Simon to Peter, which means "*rock*")—"and upon *this* rock I will build my church." You see, then, your explanation is a forced one, pulled in, as it were, by the ears, whereas mine is reasonable, natural, and grammatical.

In the same chapter, we find the following passage : "*I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.*" (Verse 19.)—Keys always have been, and are, emblematical of power and authority . Suppose I were about to travel abroad. If, at my departure, without saying a single word, I should hand one of you the keys of my house, would you not at once understand my unexplained action ? Would you not say to your neighbors : He has given me full control of his house ?— And would they not acknowledge your authority ? Yes, he who would force his way into my house without your consent, would be branded as an intruder by the good people of this parish. Now, Christ gives to St. Peter not only the keys of the kingdom of heaven, but he adds unconditionally : "Whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven." If this text has any meaning at all, it proves beyond a reasonable doubt :

1. *That St. Peter clothed with all power, is the head of the Church, and*
2. *That Christ has solemnly bound himself to ratify, at least, all his official injunctions.*

I. Think of Christ, who is essentially true, ratifying a false doctrine, promulgated by his representative, St. Peter. What a dilemma, what a humiliation, on the part of God !

1. In the 21st chapter of St. John, Christ says to St. Peter : "*Feed my lambs, feed my sheep.*" Again, this text proves two things :



1. That St. Peter was constituted the head of the Church. This is obvious. Every well-regulated flock has but one shepherd. Indeed, the Saviour says emphatically : "*There shall be one fold and one shepherd.*" But if St. Peter was the shepherd, then all, the whole flock, the sheep and the lambs, the young and the old, the clergy and the laity, were bound to obey him. Otherwise, the sheep would turn the shepherd out of the pasture.

2. That St. Peter was infallible. Think of Christ commanding the flock to follow and obey a shepherd who would lead his flock into pastures full of poisonous weeds, full of dangerous and deadly doctrines ! Yet, deny infallibility, and we have no assurance whatever whether the pasture is a good one or a bad one, whether we are feeding on the food of life, or on the food of damnation.

In the 22nd chapter of St. Luke, we find what has been said confirmed. "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have *you* (that is, all of the Apostles, mark the plural—the Latin text has '*vos*,' more than one) that he might sift *you* (plural) as wheat ; but I have prayed for *thee* (te—singular—St. Peter) that *thy* (singular) faith fail not, and *thou* being converted, confirm thy brethren." (Verses 31, 32.)

Evidently, Christ prays for two things :

1. *That St. Peter's faith fail not ; and*
2. *That St. Peter confirm his brethren.*

But, why pray for St. Peter in particular ? Does he stand more in need of prayer than the other Apostles ? Yes ; because he is the head of the Church, he is to rule and to govern, to feed and to pasture the whole flock ; if he fails, all fails. Furthermore, is not the prayer of Christ efficacious ? Suppose twelve of you were assembled and Christ were to appear among you, and to pray for one in particular, that his faith fail not ; would not that one feel himself well-protected ? In short, to deny infallibility is practically to declare the prayer of the Son of God null and void ; and to pronounce the prayer of Christ a failure, is blasphemy.

Two things, I think, have been conclusively proved :

1. *That St. Peter was the head of the Church in the Apostolic age ; and*
2. *That he was infallible.*

But, if a head was necessary in the Apostolic age, when the doctrines of our Saviour were yet fresh in the minds of the people, why not now? President Cleveland is as necessary to-day, as George Washington was in *his* time. Does not this town need a mayor now, as well as twenty years ago? Where there is no head, there is no government, and where there is no government, there is anarchy. Hence that long line of Popes, successors of St. Peter. And if they are successors, they must have the same prerogatives as St. Peter had. As long as the constitution of the United States remains the same, every new President will be clothed with the same powers as his predecessor. Has Christ changed the constitution of his Church? "I will be with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."

1. You may say to me : For 1800 hundred years Catholics were divided on the subject of infallibility. Some taught that the Pope was infallible, others held that the Church at large enjoyed that prerogative. I admit this, and I am proud to hear that Infallibility is not a newly invented thing. As long as the Supreme Court has not given its decision, lawyers may, and do, vary, in their opinion on points of law. Not so, after the court has spoken. In like manner, as long as a question is undecided, we Catholics enjoy the liberty of thinking as we please upon it, of discussing questions, *pro* and *con*. But, like the American people, we must bow our heads in obedience after the Supreme Court has rendered its decision. There is, however, this difference between the two courts : One has the promise of divine assistance, whereas the other has not : "I will be with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."

As you have admitted, Papal Infallibility is not a new doctrine. The Pope has always been clothed with the Veto power. The decrees of the last Baltimore Council, as you well know, have been sent to Rome for approbation. This was done throughout all ages. In the fourth century, St. Athanasius, the great patriarch of Alexandria, appealed to Pope Julian I., who reversed the decision of an Eastern council in fa-

vor of the saint. In the third century, we see the African bishops assembled in council under St. Cyprian. But do all the decrees meet the approbation of the Pope, St. Stephen? Indeed not.

Even general councils must have the Pope's signature. Hence, the general council of Arminium, held A. D. 359, has no force whatever, because the Pope Liberius refused to sanction its proceedings. History is full of such instances. Where Peter is, there is the Church.

2. You tell me : "Peter was a nice specimen of infallibility, when he denied his divine master. Did he not deny him as head of the Church, deny him, in his official capacity"? No. Christ was the visible head of the Church as long as he remained on earth. St. Peter never spoke in his official capacity, until after the Ascension.

3. "*With the Gentiles, St. Peter was a Gentile, and with the Jews a Jew.*"—To please the Jews, he leaves the table of the uncircumcised. It is true, St. Peter exhibited some weakness on this occasion. But what does that prove against the doctrine of infallibility? St. Peter was not impeccable. As a private man, he had his faults. But look at him in his official capacity at Jerusalem when presiding over the Council. He condemns his own acts.

4. "*The Bible is infallible ; and, consequently there is no necessity for any other infallibility.*"

What Bible? The Catholic or Protestant? In the former we find not only chapters, but whole books, which are wanting in the latter. If one is right, the other is wrong. When two parties contradict each other, both may be wrong, but one *must* be so.—But for the sake of argument, let us suppose that the Protestant Bible is true, may I not ask the question, which one—the old one or the revised one? In fact, the Bible has been revised materially, time and again. For proof, read Ward's *Errata*.

Protestants themselves, with a Protestant Bible in their hands, differ so much in the interpretation of the sacred text, that they will not worship in the same church, much less at the same altar. A book which causes so much division among the members of the human family is,

certainly, not practically infallible. A Brigham Young and a Bob Ingersoll can preach their peculiar doctrines with the Bible under their arms. What good can be derived from an infallible law-book, if the judge stumbles over every other passage? Practically, then, the Bible, I mean the true Bible, is of no advantage to us, unless it have for us a living and infallible interpreter. This interpreter is the successor of St. Peter : "Whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven."

And now, since I have answered so many of your objections, may I ask you to answer one of mine? Here it is :

We all believe with St. Paul, that "without faith it is impossible to please God." Furthermore, reason, as well as faith, teaches us that only the true faith can please God. Now, if you believe not in Infallibility, how do you know whether your faith is true or false? "It is true," you answer. Are you certain, infallibly certain? "Oh, I do not like that word infallible." But if you are not infallibly certain, there is always a doubt hovering over you. The very thought : "I may be wrong," must certainly fill the well-meaning soul with anxiety. Such a thought does not disturb the sweet peace of a good Catholic. His mind is always at rest on points of faith. It is true, during life, bad Catholics, excommunicated Catholics, have become Protestants. But who has ever heard, who has ever read, of a Catholic becoming a Protestant on his death-bed? The Catholic dies satisfied. Without infallibility, there is no true consolation, no genuine satisfaction. Imagine a traveler standing perplexed at the junction of cross-roads in a strange country. He is unable to decide which road will lead him to his destination—which conduct him to a howling wilderness. But, before the shadows of a stormy night settle down on him, he discovers the guide-post. O joy ! he has found with certainty the right road !

What the guide-post is to the traveler at the cross-roads, infallibility is to the Christian at the many cross-roads of doubt. How strange it is, that all denominations do not claim Infallibility—reason asks for it, nature longs for it, faith demands it.

Rev. J. B. Book.

## LECTURE III.

## INFIDELITY.

*"Without faith it is impossible to please God."* (Hebr. 11 : 6.)

Infidelity and indifferentism are the characteristic traits of our age. The great and fierce battles of error against truth, that marked the years immediately following the so-called Reformation have ceased, and have been succeeded by a false, delusive peace. A fatal lethargy has come over the minds of men. Religion, virtue, and duty are regarded as empty phantoms, invested, it is true, with a momentary beauty, but soon to be forgotten in the more attractive and absorbing interests of daily life. While we boast of the triumphs of genius over matter, and point to a thousand inventions and discoveries that minister to our carnal wants and carnal pleasures, we are silent on the fearful ravages which unbelief and spiritual apathy have made in our midst. We have a ready communication with the most distant nations of the earth, but we have ceased to commune with heaven. Our merchant vessels are laden with the riches of every land, but the barque of the soul is without cargo or ballast, tossed to and fro by every wind of error and passion. Our schools and academies, our colleges and universities, impart the highest instruction in every branch of human knowledge, but the science of God and revelation, the science of the Saints, is banished from the classroom and the professor's chair.

The chief cause of this moral degeneracy may be traced to the principle of private judgment introduced by Luther and Calvin, as the highest and only authority in religion and morality. From the time of these Reformers, Religion ceased to be the mistress, and became the slave of man. His reason was no longer subject to her divine authority, but she became subject to his prejudices and passions. The Scriptures, though cried up as the Supreme authority, lost their objective



value, and men no longer listened to the words : "*Thus saith the Lord* ;" but gave ear to the freaks and fancies of every upstart prophet, fanatic, or mountebank. Reason gave place to emotional frenzy. Novelty ruled the world. New fashions of belief became as numerous as new dishes, or new fashions of dress. Every year, every month, produced some fresh delusion ; and unity of faith became an impossibility. Had not every man the same privilege as his neighbor to read the Bible and interpret it as best he could, by the aid of his private judgment ? What right had Luther to denounce the Anabaptists as heterodox ? What right had Calvin to burn Servetus for opinions which he also had conscientiously drawn from the pages of the Bible ? A shoe-black was as much entitled as the learned doctor of Wittenberg, or the profound thinker of Geneva, to tell the world what he understood by the mystery of the Trinity, the incarnation of the Word, free-will, and predestination.

Toleration was the necessary result of the principle established. Not a mere toleration of opinion, preventing physical violence and persecution, leaving every one to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, but a toleration which approved all, even the most glaring, contradictions in faith as the working of one and the same Spirit of truth, whose operations differed in different individuals, according to their religious capacities and wants. Free from all *external* restraint, bound no longer by councils, synods, confessions, or catechisms, individual religion naturally became invisible. It remained confined within the chambers of the mind. This gave rise to the idea of an invisible Church and, of course, of an unseen faith, which although unknown to earth, was watched with peculiar interest by heaven. But how was this invisible Church to be recognized as such ? That which can be seen neither by the corporal nor mental eye, must needs remain in impenetrable darkness. The common sense of the people was not slow in discovering this absurdity and contradiction. But what was the remedy ? There was none. Public authority was banished ; individual faith had retired into privacy ; the Bible truths were the property of each subjective understanding ; apathy and indifference succeeded, as the natural consequences of a principle which dissolved all union among the members of the same faith, and all the obligations which spring from such a union. The educated, the talented, had come

to regard religion as a sham ; and the vulgar and illiterate, as a thing beyond the reach of their understanding.

Thus the Reformation ended in infidelity and indifferentism. Positive dogmatism is no longer the attribute of Protestantism. It has lost the very few pieces of the seamless garment of Christ, which it stole from the Catholic Church, when it carried off, at its first rupture, some thousands of nominal believers. Its ministers no longer dare preach or teach any article of faith which is likely to be uncongenial to their people. Every minister who would be heard must first feel the pulse of his audience. Opposition to the sovereign will of the dear people in matters of faith and morals, is as sure to meet with contempt as opposition in political matters. The preacher is the creature of his congregation more thoroughly than the state representative is the creature of his constituents. The awful truths : "He that believeth not shall be condemned," "Without faith it is impossible to please God," "One Faith, one Baptism," are heard no longer in the general assembly or from the pulpit, but, instead of them, the soft, flattering maxims : "Believe what you think fit : " "Suit yourselves : " "We shall all come out right in the end."

Add to this intellectual apathy, the no less general disregard of all moral obligations or restraints, which increases in proportion as faith loses its hold upon the people. Its causes also lie in the principles set down by the first Reformers. Disappointed pride generally seeks refuge in the gratification of the senses. The idolatry of the intellect is succeeded by the deification of the flesh. The worship of gods and demigods is followed by the worship of the passions. Often they go hand in hand together. The flesh is the powerful antagonist of the spirit, and fights as unrelentingly for its pretended rights as does the intellect. Hence, the Reformer could not separate the one from the other. The same pens that wrote for the rights of reason, as the judge of truth and falsehood, also wrote that man has lost his free will and that it is impossible even for the just to observe the commandments. Yea, more, they made God the Author of evil, the mover and impeller to sin ; so that the vocation of Paul to the apostleship among the Gentiles, and the adultery of David, were alike the work of God. It is not difficult to see what an injurious influence such a doctrine must have had on the morality

of the individual and of society. "If," said the logical youth, "my sins are not my own ; if God is their Author, why should I have faith, any more than justice and purity?" Yea, the conclusions derivable from these principles were carried further still. The Infidels, Spiritualists, and other Freethinkers of our day, have deduced from them : that there is no moral evil in the world ; that all that is, is right ; that physical evils are the only obstacles to man's happiness ; that true virtue consists in obeying the voice of nature, and the impulses of the heart.

Such is the lamentable condition to which many have come in our age and country. Can anything be done to remedy this evil ? We must return to first principles, and from them deduce the obligations which have been disowned, the duties which have been neglected. This I shall endeavor to do in the following lecture.

There is a God. What must we do to glorify him ? We must fall down before him, and adore him. This is our first, our reasonable, our necessary duty. If there is a God, and that God has created us, as well as all things that exist, we are bound to acknowledge the relation in which we stand to him. Now, we know and believe that we have not made ourselves. The hand of God has made us and formed us. God then is our first beginning. But he is also our last end. The whole man, body and soul, depends upon his Maker and his last end, and he must therefore acknowledge that double dependence by acts corresponding thereto. His body must manifest, after its own way, its entire dependence on the God that made it ; there must be acts of external, as well as internal, worship. To be worshipped as he deserves, God must be known to the worshipper. How could man, otherwise, tend to him as to his last end ? We do not desire what is unknown to us. Our intellect therefore must study the nature and attributes of the Deity, both to satisfy its infinite longing after the truth, and to furnish the will with the means to reach the goal to which it tends and for which it is created. Religion is that means ; for its object is to make us acquainted with the nature of the Deity, the relations in which we stand to him and he to us, and consequently, the obligations which flow from those relations.

Absolutely speaking, it is possible for human reason to know that there is a God, and that man owes him worship and adoration ; absolutely

speaking, also, it is possible for the human will to practice the obligations which flow from the knowledge of our relations to God ; yet history and experience alike teach us, that in point of fact, the one, unaided by revelation, has never understood the full extent of those truths; whilst the other, unassisted by grace, has never practised the obligations which these truths naturally entail. Scarcely was Adam banished from the delightful garden of Paradise, when those truths, which, before his fall, he clearly beheld, and faithfully adhered to, in all their beauty, were obscured in the minds of his children. The most absurd and contradictory notions of the Deity and his attributes, began to prevail. The pure worship of the one true God was gradually abandoned, giving place to the rankest idolatry and superstition. Not only the vulgar crowd, the illiterate multitude, but the most learned sages, the profoundest philosophers, the acutest lawgivers, the most prominent statesmen, orators, and poets, lost sight of the true God, and indulged in religious practices which were either highly ridiculous or grossly revolting. Not one of them, from Confucius and Lao-Tsee in China, to Cicero and Seneca in Rome, was able to give the world a natural theology or moral philosophy which answered all the wants of the mind and heart. The works of the best of them teem with errors and absurdities. Nor could they, on the hypothesis that they had taught the whole truth concerning God and man, and the relations which exist between them, have succeeded in acquainting the world at large with what they themselves knew, or in enforcing the obligations which they deduced from that knowledge. To succeed in this, they should have had it in their power to communicate the talent necessary to fathom these truths and obligations, and the moral force to put them in practice. This was impossible. Meanwhile, error asserted its right to dogmatize, and passion to be gratified and indulged. How could the most lucid demonstrations of the philosophers check the arrogance of the one and the powerful impulses of the other, without the interposition of a higher influence ? No wonder, therefore, that Plato exclaimed : "A teacher is necessary, but no one will teach us, unless a God lead the way !"

That teacher came, that God appeared, and showed us the way. He gave us a revelation from Heaven,—a revelation which is twofold. In the first place, it consists of those truths which, strictly speaking, reason

alone could know without special assistance, such as the existence of God, his Eternity, Providence, the immortality of the soul, the reward of virtue and the punishment due to vice. These truths are supernatural through revelation, not as to the objective verity, but as to the manner in which they are made known. Secondly, it comprises truths which transcend the natural powers of reason, the revelation of which is supernatural as to their substance and to their manner. Such, for instance, is the truth that God is one in essence and three in person. Such truths, because they lie out of the natural capacity of human reason, are called mysteries. Since then there were truths, which reason, unaided by revelation, could not possibly think of, much less understand, even after they were revealed to us as to their intrinsic nature or manner of existence,—it was necessary that God should attest the fact of his having revealed such truths by evidences unmistakable to the reason of man.

These evidences he did give to man and they consist of miracles and prophecies. A miracle is a sensible effect, at variance with the known laws of nature, and produced in confirmation of a certain doctrine. A prophecy is a certain prediction of an event which cannot possibly be foreseen in natural causes, and which is uttered likewise in attestation of a certain truth. Such miracles and prophecies transcending, as they do, all the known powers of created nature, can be the work of God alone. Whenever, therefore, they occur in confirmation of the truth of revelation, that revelation is thereby proved divine,—provided there remains no solid reason to deny it after the revelation is made. But there can be no solid reason when the truth which the miracle attests is not evidently contradictory to any other well known truth of reason or revelation, and when there is nothing in the manner of proposing the truth, nor in the end, for which it is made, or in other circumstances, which could make it improbable.

Now, that such miracles have been wrought and prophecies uttered in attestation of the revelation made by God to man, is a well known fact of history. The pages of the Old and New Testaments abound with miraculous facts and prophecies. The blind see, the lame walk, the dead rise from their graves, in confirmation of the doctrines there recorded. We are bound to accept such testimony as the revelation of God himself. For when God reveals any truth whether of a speculative



or practical nature, he must needs do so for an end. This end can be no other than his greater glory and our greater happiness. Both these motives oblige us to accept and believe his revelation. Has he not a perfect right to be known, to be revered, served, and adored as he pleases? To withhold that tribute of our mind and heart, is to insult his sovereign dominion over our whole being. Zeal for our own happiness impels us to make use of these means which will most certainly and infallibly realize that end. Among these means, there is none more necessary than a correct knowledge of God, and of the duties which we owe him as our first beginning and last end. Religion is the only adequate guide of this knowledge. Hence, Religion is synonymous with happiness here and hereafter.

God is infinite and infallible truth. He cannot be deceived himself, nor can he deceive us in the revelation of his truths. All then are bound to believe his revelation in the one only sense in which it was made. Varying belief in one and the same revelation is an evident contradiction. It is not true that all religions are equally acceptable to God. To predicate such an absurdity of God is to blaspheme his name, and to destroy his very nature. To believe God's word otherwise than as it lies in his divine mind is to believe God different from, and contradictory to, himself. God is the truth; he cannot, at the same time, be error. God is one, he cannot possibly be divided. To admit that truth and error are the same in God is not only to place him in contradiction to himself, but to destroy his very nature.

If all religions are the same, then God can be served by error and by vice, as well as by truth and virtue. True and false religion contradict each other, both in points of speculative and practical doctrine. What the one admits, the other denies. What the one prescribes as a duty, the other forbids as sin. Can you believe in the same God, if with the Socinian, you deny the Trinity of Persons, or with the Trinitarian, admit the Trinity of God? Can you acknowledge the same Author of truth, whether you believe, or do not believe, in Predestination, exclusive of Free Will? Is it the same whether you believe or disbelieve in the necessity of regeneration by Baptism? Is there no distinction between the doctrine of Luther—that faith alone will save a man, and the doctrine of those who preach the necessity of good works

unto salvation ? What kind of God do you make unto yourselves ? One who delights in all possible contradictions, who, like the unbeliever or heretic, calls truth error and error truth, virtue vice and vice virtue ? God wishes to be worshipped in spirit and truth, but he cannot be worshipped in truth, when the religion which commands the worship is false. If all religions are acceptable to God, what prevents you from embracing and rejecting one after the other ? To-day a Jew ; to-morrow a Turk ; next day a Greek ; the next a Lutheran, or an Episcopalian, a Methodist, a Quaker, a German Reformed, a Spiritualist, a Mormon. Yea, what forbids you prostrating yourself under the wheels of the juggernaut, instead of falling down before the Crucifix ?

Nor is it true that as honesty is the best policy, so it is the best religion. Honesty, in your sense of the word, is the same as justice, but justice is a virtue which gives to every one his own. This virtue is not perfect unless you give God his own. Hence, the Redeemer said : "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." God has rights over you ; consequently you have duties towards him. To refuse compliance with those duties, to withhold from him what is his due, is to be unjust, to be dishonest.

From what has been said, you have learned that religion alone can teach us the nature of those duties which we owe to God ; and that that religion must necessarily be one. You must know that religion in order to know your duties ; and to accomplish them, you must follow its commands. You cannot please God in any other way ; you cannot be truly happy, except in one true religion, which he himself has revealed and established upon earth.

Will you boast, after this, that honesty is the best and only religion ? Honesty is not the only virtue, injustice not the only vice, in the code of morality. There are as many virtues and vices, as there are passions in the human breast. Every one of these virtues must be practised, every one of these vices must be avoided, in order to attain happiness. What sanction have you in the natural law, for the practice of the one and the avoidance of the other ? Will you say that virtue is her own reward ? True, but is the happiness which follows the consciousness of good, and the remorse which follows the consciousness of evil, a sufficient motive for all ? Not only does conscience, left to itself, often

entertain erroneous notions concerning the duties which it is to perform, and the vices which it must avoid, but prejudice, interest, ambition, and a host of other passions, not unfrequently, change and pervert all the principles of morality on which it should be based. To form conscience, to secure it against sophistry on the one hand, and passion on the other, you need religion, whose principles are the only safeguards against error and passion.

But we are told, the sanction of virtue is in the social laws of nations. They are sufficient to make man an honest, upright, moral being, such as your religion requires him to be.

This objection is so directly at variance with common sense and daily experience, that it scarcely deserves an answer. Besides the well known fact, that no nation, ancient or modern, which attempted to draw up a code of laws for the government of its people, independently of religion, ever succeeded in making thoroughly just and reasonable laws, their application, at most only reaches public crimes and virtues. Only manifest transgressions are punished ; only manifest virtues rewarded, thereby. What becomes, meanwhile, of countless secret violations of the law ? Of those thousand ingenious methods whereby the dishonest merchant overreaches his neighboring business ? Of those outrageous frauds which hypocritical statesmen and magistrates perpetrate upon the people they govern ? What of the private quarrels in the family ? of the private immorality of passionate youth ? the secret infidelity of wedded love ? Human laws may chain the culprit, bury the transgressor in the gloomy prison cell ; they may make even a public example of him by hanging him upon a gibbet, but they cannot enforce the practice of those virtues, which are the foundation-stones of private as well as public order, prosperity, and happiness. They cannot teach the egotist, humanity ; the drunkard, sobriety ; the idle, industry ; the miser, hospitality ; the husband, chastity ; the wife, fidelity ; they cannot check those fearful scandals which are the ruin of the innocent and the bane of morality. Nothing can do this efficaciously except the laws of religion. Apart from the terrors of human vengeance and the hopes of earthly rewards, religion must point out to the delinquent eternal punishments, and to the well-doer, everlasting rewards. The laws of religion alone can form a sound in-

dividual and social conscience, curb the restlessness of passion, and create respect for virtue. They, alone, can produce that moral heroism, which is willing to sacrifice all, father, mother, brother, sister, lands, estates, yea, even life itself, if necessary, to assert the majesty of truth or the dignity of virtue. They alone inspire that true chivalry which makes a man the conqueror of himself.

"All very well," says the man of business ; "but let women do the praying, and we shall do the working. A man after all, must live and his family must be provided for ; we cannot leave these things to chance." In other words, you wish to say that men have no need of religion, and that it is merely an amusement proper for the other sex. Do you really believe what you say ? Is man's nature different from woman's, that he can claim a special exemption from duties and obligations which were imposed on all ? Though he be head of his household, is there no master to whom he in turn owes submission and obedience ? Though he be a king or a mighty ruler, is there not One above him who calls himself the King of kings and the Lord of lords ? Are not his passions as strong and his temptations more numerous than those of woman ? Does not the same judgment await him ? Does not the same hell await the adulterer as the adulteress ? Did not the Prodigal Son need conversion as much as the Magdalen ? Had not Zachæus need of atoning for his injustice,—the thief upon the cross for his robberies and murders ?

True, you have your duties to fulfil with regard to your wife and children, your patrons, your customers, your clients. But religion far from preventing you from doing so, commands a scrupulous attention to your business. Nor do any of her doctrines or practices interfere with your domestic or social obligations. All she does is to regulate them, to give them the proper tendency, to point out the only real end for which they were imposed upon you. She stimulates activity, moderates excess, sympathizes with misfortune, removes the causes of despair, and opens the way to better hopes than those which spring from mere natural success in life. She teaches you how to sanctify labor, how to make every drop of sweat a pearl in your diadem of unfading glory.

The great misfortune of our age lies precisely in the inversion of the

laws of order. We have forgotten that man lives not by bread alone, that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, that to be true to ourselves, we should first seek the kingdom of God and his justice, and that a kind Providence, which clothes the lily of the field and feeds the little sparrow, will add all other things that are really necessary and useful to our happiness here below. We forget that money cannot supply the want of honesty ; and that power does not preclude the necessity of submission and humility ; that God cannot be bribed by the one, nor intimidated by the other ; that he is no respecter of persons ; that before him, we are all as if we were not,—a handful of dust and ashes, a leaf which is borne away by the wind. We forget that we have no lasting resting-place here below ; that we are seeking a City not built by human hands ; that our Eden was forfeited, and that invisible cherubim guard the entrance to its delightful bowers. We forget the question of our Saviour : “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?”

God is good. He has loved us with an everlasting love. He wills not the death of the sinner. He did not create me to be damned. Yes, God is truly good and merciful ; but must you be evil because he is good ? He wills not the death of the sinner ; why then, do you refuse to be converted and live ? God is good ; but he is also just. While his infinite goodness invites you to repentance, and offers you the precious gift of faith (without which it is impossible to be saved), his infinite justice, on the other hand, threatens obstinacy in sin and wilful unbelief with eternal destruction. He that will say to the just on the Last Day : “Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,” will also say to the wicked : “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels.” You misconstrue the goodness of God. God is good in creating you for an end which transcends all utterance and conception ; for he himself is to be your reward exceeding great. He is good in giving you the means to reach that end, in offering to all the gift of faith, in facilitating the observance of his commandments by his holy grace, in opening to all the channels of those graces through the holy Sacraments. He is good in furnishing



all with the means of repentance and expiation for their sins. In all these things, God's goodness is most beautifully and touchingly visible. But you would have God's goodness—conniving at impiety, sanctioning infidelity, encouraging scepticism, promoting indifferentism in religion! All these things are inconsistent with God's nature, and he cannot approve or sanction them.

Doubtless, God did not create you in order to damn you; he left that fearful power to yourself. Like a good father, he gave you the means to be saved, and told you, at the same time, that their abuse would lead to your own destruction. We are to judge ourselves, in order not to be judged by the Lord. Hence, we read that Judas who betrayed Christ, saw, before he terminated his wretched existence by suicide, that he was condemned. His own reason and conscience convicted him of damnable guilt in the sight of his Maker. If the governor of a state offers life to a condemned convict, where rests the blame if the latter insists on going to the gallows? God offers you life, if you will but comply with the few easy conditions he attaches to the boon.

But these conditions are too hard. Have you ever endeavored to fulfil them? Do you deem it a legitimate excuse when the lazy student says to his master: "Oh! I cannot learn that lesson" knowing all the while that he has not made the least attempt to do so? Can you excuse your servant for averring that a certain task is too heavy if he never once put his hand to it to test its difficulties? You do not reason thus concerning the daily duties of life. Study, reflect, meditate, ask, and pray, and you will find that the yoke which you dread is sweet and the burden light. You will find that you can do all things in him that strengthens you.

I shall see to these matters hereafter. When? When you are old and decrepit, when life's lease has run out, and you are about to pay the forfeit of neglect of payment? Why not now? Time is short, eternity is long. Do you say of your business matters: "I shall attend to them hereafter"? Do you defer your dinner till to-morrow, while your eager appetite clamors for the food that is placed before you on the table? "O, ye sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart?" "Watch ye, because you know not at what hour your Lord will come."

Is not time given you to prepare for eternity ? You delay not to purchase stocks, to accumulate capital, add house to house, acre to acre ; why then do you defer purchasing the precious pearl of the kingdom of heaven ? You have time to waste in attending clubs and meetings, in frequenting theatres and ball rooms, in gaming and gambling, in eating and drinking ; why can you not spend a moment in listening to the word of God ? in sating your hungry soul with the Bread that came from heaven ? in drinking the waters that spring up unto eternal life ? You have time to beautify your premises, to cultivate perishable flowers, to adorn your parlors and your sitting rooms ; yet you cannot find a spare hour to adorn your heart with the beauties of virtue ? There is good and evil in all religions, why should I be bound to connect myself with any ? If you mean to say that the principles of all religions are partly true and partly false, you are mistaken, for then, there would be no religion at all. Religion comes from God, not from man ; and nothing false or evil can come from him who is the Sovereign Truth and Good. If you mean to say that even false religions contain some good principles, you are right in the assertion but wrong in the inference which you draw therefrom. A religion made up of sheer errors without any basis of truth whatever could scarcely be conceived, much less exist, in the world. But it does not follow that a part of the truth will serve you as well as the whole, any more than that twenty-five cents is of as much value to you as a whole dollar,—a maimed limb as good as a sound, a sick body as serviceable as a healthy one. We need truth in its integrity, not in fragments only ; we need the full blaze, not a mere glimmer, of the light. Whatever God reveals, he wishes to be believed unreservedly. One word of his is as good as another, one command as binding as another. Christ is not divided ; you cannot halt between him and Belial ; you must choose between light and darkness.

Whosoever offends in one point is become guilty of all.—If you wish to say that in all religions there are bad as well as good men, you must make a distinction. That there are good men in false religions in the sense that false religions produce good men, is not true any more than that the fig-tree bears grapes, or the vine figs, or that fresh water yields salt. Men are better than their principles, only when they abandon

bad for good principles in their practice. That there are bad men in the true religion, cannot be denied ; but they are bad despite of, not in virtue of, their religion.

There are bad children in good families, and bad citizens under very good constitutions. Should the good children cease to be members of the family, disown the father that begot them, and the mother that bore them, merely because they have brothers and sisters who neglect their filial duty ? Should the honest citizen flee his state or country, because he lives in the midst of knaves and rogues ? The religion of the Saviour did not lose any of its truth and beauty because a weak Apostle denied his Master, and a wicked traitor defiled his soul by hypocrisy, sacrilege, and suicide. The rays of the sun do not lose their light because they fall upon substances impervious to their splendor. The art of healing cannot be set aside as useless, because its remedies do not cure every patient to whom they are applied. The true religion has to deal with men of free-will. They can reject or abuse the blessings which it offers them. The offer is not the less good, because the recipient of the gift proves ungrateful. Truth and virtue are not convertible terms, they are not even correlative. The best lawyer at the bar may be the greatest rogue in his office, and the most learned and experienced judge be a greater criminal than the culprit whom his sentence dooms to death. So the strongest believer may fall into sin.

My parents do not allow me to follow the convictions of my mind. If I become a member of the Church, they will disown me, disinherit me. My friends would forsake me, my companions would laugh at me. Suppose all these consequences were to follow, should you, on that account, expose your immortal soul to eternal ruin ? Have you not read in the Bible : "Fear not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear him that can destroy both body and soul into hell" ? Every one that shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven ; but he that shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven. Do you think that I came to send peace upon earth ? I came not to send peace, but the sword. I came to set a man at variance with his father, the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against

her mother-in-law . . . He that loves father and mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he that loves son and daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. . . He that finds his life, shall lose it, and he that shall lose his life for me shall find it." Again, it is recorded in the Sacred Text : "If the world hate you, know that it has hated me before you. If you had been of the world, the world would love its own, but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember my word that I said to you, the servant is not greater than the master. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." The difficulties which you have to encounter, the sufferings of persecutions, the sneers and scoffs which you will have to endure, are the best proof that the religion you embrace is the religion of Christ ; and therefore, that it is the true, the only saving religion of the Gospel.

Did the Apostles shrink from the prison and the scourge ? Did they, on that account, deny their faith, or even cease to preach in the name of Jesus ? Let your answer to parents, friends, and relatives, be that of Peter and John to the princes, ancients, and Scribes in Jerusalem : "If it be just in the sight of God, to hear you rather than God, judge ye, we cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard." Think of the martyrs who, rather than betray, by a single sign, their indifference to the religion which they had embraced, proclaimed its necessity unto salvation from the pyre, the boiling cauldron, the wheel, and the gibbet. Think of the heroic confessors, who were torn from home and friends, had their property confiscated, and were themselves cast into filthy dungeons or banished into arid wastes and deserts. Shame upon your cowardice ! If you are convinced of the truth, why do you blush to confess it before men, before God and his angels ? Do you hope to be saved by your persecuting parents, your sneering relations, or your scoffing friends ? Will they give their souls in exchange for yours ? It is true, you owe respect, honor, obedience, and love to the secondary authors of your being ; but it is also true, that you must love God above all other things, with your whole heart, your whole mind, your whole soul,—for this is the first and greatest commandment. God has the supreme right to your honor, obedience, and

love. Moreover, do not your parents, relatives, and friends tell you daily that every man is free to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience? Why, then, are you afraid to assert your rights, merely because, in contradiction with their own principles, you would be exposed to the shafts of their ridicule, and the cruelty of their persecutions? Remember that you are accountable to God for your own deeds, that every one must bear his own burden, and that God will render to every man according to his works.

Look well into this matter. Your all depends upon the choice you make in religion. You need religion; without it, you cannot serve your Divine Master, nor love him as he deserves. Without it, you cannot perfect your nature, nor attain the end for which you are created. Your soul is at stake. Heaven and hell are in the balance. There can be but one religion, for truth is one; then seek that one religion, and you shall find it. Above all, ask for the gift of faith, and it shall be given you. "For this cause, bend your knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened by his spirit, with might unto the inward man, that Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts." (Eph. 3: 14, 16, 17.)

ADAPTED FROM FATHER SMARIUS' LECTURES.



## LECTURE IV.

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### CONFESSION.

*"Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them."* (John 20 : 23.)

Man is a weak, frail, sinful creature. He has not only a sunny side to his nature, but also a dark, cloudy night-side. Not seldom he deviates from the strait and narrow road that leads to his final aim, and often he wanders into paths that terminate in destruction. His conscience is often dimmed and obscured ; his heart a prey to feelings of remorse ; his soul filled with utter despair. Ever since the fall, the wickedness of men has been great on earth and all the thought of their heart has been bent on evil, at all times, for the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth. St. John tells us "all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world." This inclination to sin is universal. It exists in the just man after his regeneration through Baptism, as well as in the unregenerated pagan ; and through passion and temptation, it leads the greater portion of mankind to rebel against their Maker and transgress his Law.

Now, the question is : Did Christ the Founder of Christianity, leave us any visible, palpable remedy against actual sin ? Or, in other words : Did Christ leave to his ministering Church, the power of pardoning sins committed after Baptism, and if he left such power, is it a logical sequence, that those whose sins are to be forgiven, should confess them to the ministers of his Church ?

The better to understand the answer to these questions, allow me to premise certain truths which most Christians admit with the Roman Catholic Church. The object of Christ's mission to the world was twofold. He came, first, to destroy all error and teach all truth. Secondly, to extirpate sin, and establish the empire of virtue in its stead. These

may be called the fundamental objects of Christ's coming, and therefore, of Christianity, of the Church, as a divine institution. Both these objects he came to realize in a visible, palpable manner ; and his promise was given to the Church that they should exist to the end of time. They continue to be realized to-day as perfectly as they were in the Apostolic age.

The first object is the destruction of error and the teaching of all truth. He did not leave the knowledge of truth to the arbitration of the individual intellect. He established a living, authoritative, infallible tribunal, which should guide men into all truth, and free them from all error opposed to the doctrines of salvation. Is it not natural to suppose that he adopted with regard to the destruction of sin and the establishment of the empire of virtue in the heart a method similar to that which he adopted to establish the reign of truth in the minds of men ? Did he leave the manner of atoning for sin—the manner of getting rid of it—to the arbitrary will of every individual sinner ? Did he leave the judgment of the validity or invalidity of the conditions and dispositions for efficacious repentance, to the same arbitrary will of each sinner, or did he appoint a ministry with power at once to take cognizance of the sins committed, of the conditions and dispositions of true repentance, and did he invest them with the power to apply or to retain the pardon of those sins ? Our separated brethren contend for the former, we for the latter, as the true method established by the Founder of Christianity.

I proceed to prove the truth of our doctrine : that Christ gave to his Apostles the full and exclusive power of forgiving and retaining whatsoever sins might be committed by men after Baptism. This he did, when, after having laid down, as a last resource to convert an offending brother, that they should tell the Church, he enjoined, that if the sinner would not hear the Church, they should thenceforth regard him as a heathen and a publican. And he added : "Amen, I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven ; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven." The power of binding and loosing supposes bonds—*what bonds ?* Surely, not physical, but spiritual, bonds. What are spiritual bonds, if not sins and the effects of sin ? Christ, then, conferred upon

his Apostles, upon the first ministers of his Church, the twofold power of binding and loosing whatsoever sins might be brought under the action of their judicial power ; and he promised, in the most solemn manner, that the power thus exercised by them on earth, would be ratified in heaven.

After he has made the general atonement for sin by his bloody death on the ignominious cross, after he has triumphed over death (which is the wages of sin)—his glorious Resurrection,—before returning to his heavenly Father, our divine Redeemer speaks again to his Apostles, and if possible, in still clearer terms, upon this subject. Observe that the ransom for all sin had now been paid to an offended Deity ; the reconciliation, through the Mediator's death, of sinful man with God, had been effected ; but the conditions of the acceptance remained to be fulfilled according to the plan of divine Providence. The merits of Christ's redeeming Blood were to be applied to the souls of those for whom it had been shed. This must be done according to the method intended by the Mediator and his heavenly Father.

What is this method ? Is it that every sinner shall, by faith and hope, by repentance and sorrow, apply the Precious Blood to himself, and judge for himself of the conditions of that application ? We answer by no means. No one can be a judge in his own cause. No one can trust his own authority in this matter. To tell a man to do so, is to tell him to lean upon a broken reed. The Redeemer willed that his merits should be applied to man by one visible, eternal channel,—the Sacrament of Penance. He instituted it for that purpose, and appointed his Apostles and their successors as the dispensers of that wholesome remedy, the judges of the dispositions of its recipients.

"Now, when it was late that same day, being the first day of the week, and the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst and said to them: Peace be to you, as the Father hath sent me, I also send you. When he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them : Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." The Protestant Bible here reads : "Whosoever sins you remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins you retain, they are retained." To remit and for-

give mean the same thing ; the only difference is, that the word remit is derived from the Latin ; whereas forgive is a native word of our multifarious English language. Let us analyze the meaning of the passage : "Peace be to you." How fitting a salutation to those whom Christ was about to make his ministers of peace and reconciliation ! "As the father hath sent me, I also send you." Recall the nature and object of Christ's mission to a fallen world to do away with all error and sin, and to establish the empire of truth and virtue in the minds and hearts of men. With what power ? With *all* power, for all power was given to him in heaven and upon earth ; with divine power, for Christ came to us with the fulness of the Godhead. Christ did not descend from heaven to dwell upon earth for a few years and then withdraw with all his gifts and powers to an eternal repose, leaving man alone in all his misery and wretchedness. He came to save all men to the end of time ; and when he left the earth, he was pleased to communicate the powers he exercised and the gifts he brought, to men, his chosen representatives, to be employed by them as they had been employed by him to the consummation of the world. "*As the Father hath sent me, I also send you.*" The Church, therefore, must possess all the powers and gifts of her Founder, and among others, that of pardoning the sinner, and reconciling him to God. The Scriptures specially record that Christ forgave sins to Mary Magdalen, to the man sick of the palsy, and to the penitent thief on the Cross. "I have power to pardon sin ; this power I confer on you, as the Father," etc.

Next he breathed upon them. Why this peculiar, solemn ceremony ? When our separated brethren assist at a Catholic baptism, and among other rites, see the priest breathing upon the person to be baptized, they, not unfrequently, smile and whisper into each other's ears : "Look at the old priest blowing in his face !" I wonder whether these facetious individuals would have smiled at Jesus breathing upon his Apostles ! But to the point. Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Who is the Holy Ghost ? The Third Person of the ever blessed and adorable Trinity, to whom in a special manner, belongs the work of sanctifying the souls of men by the infusion of sanctifying grace purchased for us by the blood of the Redeemer.

Why all these imposing and significant preludes ? Why say to them :

"Peace be to you, as the Father hath sent me, I also send you"?—Why this solemn breathing upon the Apostles? Why this imparting of the Holy Ghost? Christ neither says, nor does anything uselessly. Something grand must, of necessity, follow such impressive preparations. Listen, and understand the object: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." The words are plain; they need no elaborate comment. The only escape is to deny the Bible outright, for the words are too clear to be perverted to any other meaning than that which they bear on their face. The proposition is universal in all its parts. There is question of forgiving sins, all sins, without restriction, "whose sins," no person is excepted. All men are the subjects of this pardoning power.

The same reasoning applies to the other parts of the text: "Whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." He confers a double power upon the Apostles, and promises to ratify their exercise of it.—Furthermore, the Apostles are men, they are not angels, much less Gods. As men, therefore, having a human nature, they are clothed with the divine power of forgiving and retaining the sins of every one who confesses to them.

Nothing can be plainer than the fact, that the power of binding and loosing, of remitting and retaining, sins, was by these words and on this particular occasion, entrusted by the Founder of Christianity to his disciples. But not to them only; the mission of Christianity was to be perpetual, coextensive with time. Hence the objects of the mission are of their nature coextensive with time. Hence the ministry which is empowered to effect these objects is destined to endure till the end of time. As there will always be error to be refuted and condemned, so there will always be sin to be forgiven or retained. The identity of the Apostolic mission requires a corresponding identity of the powers devolving successively upon the delegates of those powers. There must be therefore at this day a ministry which claims and exercises, in behalf of sinners, the same powers that Christ conferred on his Apostles.

Where is that ministry? Not among our separated brethren, nor in any of the so-called Protestant churches. For all of them, even those who claim the power of forgiving or retaining sins, in their printed



confessions of faith, reject it in their teaching and practice. Where then is that ministry? No where evidently, in its perpetuity, in its uninterrupted and uniform manner of belief and practice, except in the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church thus proves herself the Church of Christ. She alone has always claimed and exercised that power of forgiving and retaining sins which Christ conferred on his Apostles, and which, according to the very object of that power, was to be claimed and exercised by the successors of those disciples to the end of time. All those so-called Christian churches which discard this power, thereby prove themselves no longer in union with the Church of Christ, which has always believed remission of sins an article of the Christian faith. What is the great objection urged by our dissenting brethren against this doctrine? That it is a presumptuous assumption of power which belongs to God alone. Who, they say, can forgive sins but God only? This is no new objection. Do you know who were the first to urge this objection, and how, and by whom it was refuted? Open your New Testament, and read the beginning of the second chapter of St. Mark's Gospel. We are told, that when Jesus was again in Capharnaum, they brought to him one who was sick of the palsy; and when, with much labor, the bearers had succeeded in placing the sick man at the feet of Jesus, he says to him: "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." The sacred historian proceeds: "And some of the Scribes were sitting there and thinking in their hearts: Why does this man speak thus? He blasphemeth; who can forgive sins but God only." You observe, the objection is precisely the same as that of our separated brethren. It is made by the Scribes, the sworn enemies of our Lord, who never rested till, by calumny and persecution, they succeeded in nailing him to the cross. They denied the divinity of Jesus, and therefore thought him a mere man. And yet they heard him say: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." This they considered blasphemy, not believing that a man could have such power given him. How does our Lord answer, and refute, their objection? "And Jesus presently knowing in his spirit that they so thought within themselves, says to them: Why do you think so in your hearts? Which is easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say Arise, take up thy bed and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive

sins (he says to the sick of the palsy), I say to thee Arise ! take up thy bed and go into thy own house. And immediately he arose, and taking up his bed, he went his way." Our Saviour answers this objection of the Scribes in the very sense in which they made it. He proves to them, and confirms his proof by a miracle, that it is possible, yea a fact, that the Son of man, not the Son of God, as such only, but the Son of man has power, not in heaven, but on earth, here among men, to forgive sins ; and by that same miracle he proved, once for all, that the same power may be possessed by other men, not indeed through condignity of nature, but by delegation of power. The power of forgiving sins is not so absolutely God's own, that he cannot communicate it to creatures. Do we ever delegate certain powers to others, which, strictly speaking, we do not exercise ourselves ? Yes : by our suffrages we elect a state Governor, who, in his official character, can pardon crimes against the State, and reprieve the culprit, though we, as individual citizens, have not the power of life and death. No priest pretends to have the power of forgiving or retaining sins in virtue of his birth, parentage, talents, genius, or education. He claims it in virtue of a commission granted to him by the authorized depositaries of this power, namely : St. Peter and the Apostles and their lawful successors, who received it from Christ, as he, in his human nature, received all power from God. The only question to be settled is the question of fact : Did Jesus Christ give such power to men, to his Apostles ? This fact I have settled by an appeal to the Scriptures, and it decides the matter beyond all dispute.

But if Christ did really leave this power to his ministering Church, it follows that the confession of sins is a necessary condition of its exercise. Such power is of a twofold character : to forgive and to retain. There are instances, therefore, wherein the minister of this Sacrament is obliged to forgive, and others in which justice and prudence require him to postpone, or absolutely to refuse, the pardon of offences. This power, consequently, is discretionary and judicial. He is obliged to form an equitable judgment concerning the case which is brought before his tribunal, and to be able to do this, he must needs know the matter on which he is to decide. What would you think if one of our judges, without any examination of the accused, without any self-ac-

cusation on the part of the defendant, would take his seat in court, and pronounce sentence upon him? Suppose he should address the prisoners at the bar in this way: "John Jones, you are guilty, and condemned to ten years in the penitentiary; William Smith, you are not guilty; go home, and join your family; James Brown, you are guilty, and condemned to death!" Would not such a judge deserve condemnation of every fair-minded man? Apply the case to the priest. Suppose he should, without any clear or distinct knowledge of the consciences of his penitents, pronounce sentence of absolution on some, and sentence of condemnation on others, would he not expose himself to the danger of committing acts of the grossest injustice? Perhaps he would absolve the very one to whom he should refuse forgiveness, and *vice versa*. The confessor must possess full knowledge of the cause on which he is to exercise his judgment. But this knowledge is possible only on one or the other of the following suppositions. Either God, who gives his minister the twofold power, reveals to him, in every instance, the guilt of the penitent, or the penitent must become his own accuser. Now, we know that in the ordinary Providence of God, the first of these means is an impossibility; it follows, therefore, that penitents must accuse themselves. But what is this self-accusation, except confession? The necessity of confession is, therefore, a logical conclusion drawn from the divinely revealed proposition: that Christ left to his Church the power of forgiving and retaining the sins of men.

Nor let it be said that a general knowledge of man's sinfulness, on the part of the minister, or a general accusation of that sinfulness on the part of the penitent, is sufficient to the discreet and just exercise of the confessor's power. For it must be remembered, that sin is a violation or transgression of the divine law, and that these violations are, of their own nature, specifically and numerically different. There are different kinds of sin, and these different kinds may be committed repeatedly. The mere knowledge of the general sinfulness of mankind, or a general self-accusation on the part of the penitent, would, by no means, give to the spiritual judge an approximate knowledge of the sinner's real claims to pardon or of his unworthiness thereof. Unbelief, for instance, differs specifically from superstition; blasphemy, from cursing. All manslaughter is not murder; nor is all manslaughter crimi-

nal to the same degree. Fornication and adultery constitute two distinct and specific crimes. Furthermore, a judge who has the power to pardon and to retain, must take cognizance of the moral disposition of his penitents. Are they really sorry? Are they resolved to amend, to avoid the occasions of sin? Have they made restitution, or are they willing to repair the damage which their sins may have caused to a second or third party? All these are dispositions, the presence or absence of which in the penitent, must influence and determine the judge in the judgment which he is to pronounce. But all these lie hidden in the heart, and cannot be known unless the penitent himself reveal them to the confessor. Suppose a penitent should come to me and say: "Father, I am a great sinner, and I crave for myself the benefit of your pardoning ministry," and I should, without more ado, say to him: "Well, my child, I absolve thee of all thy sins in the name of the Father," etc, and suppose you know all the while that the said penitent had swindled you out of ten thousand dollars, and although well able to restore them absolutely refused to do so—would you deem my absolution a valid one? And, yet you say that the general knowledge of man's sinfulness or the general self-accusation of the sinner is all that Christ requires in the Sacrament of Penance!

The judicial power to forgive and retain sins, plainly implies the duty of confession on the part of the penitent. He who willed the pardoning power, also willed confession as a condition necessary to its exercise. Hence the command of St. James: "Confess your sins one to another." He had previously said: "Is any man sick among you? let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." Whereupon, he concludes: "Confess, therefore, your sins one to another." The confession is to be made to the priest of the Church who is brought in to the sick man, to the priest of the Church who is to anoint him, to the priest of the Church who is to pray for him. It was thus that the primitive Christians understood the doctrine of Christ and of the Apostles. For we are told, that "many of them that believed, and came confessing and declaring their deeds." Observe it was not the unbelievers, it was they who believed, that made the confession and declaration, not of their good but of their evil; of deeds, as is evident from the fruit of their

confession,—the burning of their bad books ;—for the Scripture says that “Many of them who had followed curious arts brought together their books and burned them before all.”

I come now to the leading objections which our adversaries are accustomed to urge against confession. The first of these objections is of a practical nature. When our friends hear the word Confession, their nerves are unpleasantly thrilled, a panic seizes their hearts. “What, go to confession? Never! It is too hard to go and tell all one’s sins, aye and one’s very thoughts and most hidden desires, to a fellow-mortal, to a man like one’s self!” Granted that it is hard to poor human nature, to declare its hidden weakness and secret miseries to a fellow-creature, does it follow thence that there is no divine command to do so? Such an inference were, indeed, illogical. Would you consider this true Christian reasoning: Jesus Christ never instituted anything hard or unpleasant to flesh and blood: to confess one’s sins *is* hard and unpleasant to flesh and blood,—therefore, confession was never instituted by Christ. If so, you will be obliged to reject most of these moral doctrines which you have hitherto believed. Thus, for instance, is it not hard for human nature to deny itself, to take up its cross daily, to be slandered, persecuted even unto death for justice’ sake? Yet, all these things were to be done and endured by the disciples of him, whose life was a perpetual cross and martyrdom. Is not sin the greatest of all evils? What more natural than that in order to get rid of it, man should be obliged to undergo some hardship and humiliation? When there is question of recovering the health of our corruptible bodies, we submit ourselves to the judgment and treatment of skilful physicians; we declare to them, in detail, the symptoms of the most private and shameful diseases. Why should we demur when it comes to manifesting to our spiritual physicians the maladies of our immortal souls, that they may be saved from everlasting death? Where is the felon, the criminal of State, who having deserved death, would not be willing to save his temporal life by acknowledging in full to his lawyer, the crimes of which he has been guilty? And why should we deem it hard to confess our sins to the ministers of God, in order to free our souls from eternal destruction?

But this objection suggests a new and unanswerable proof of the



divinity of the institution which it assails. If it is true, as Calvin says, that confession is a rack, a torture, applied by the priests of Rome to the consciences of men, how comes it that millions of men and women in all ages and countries, have submitted so willingly, so readily, to this torture? Why did they not rise up against the tyrants who stretched them out upon that moral rack? And not only the ignorant, the vulgar crowd, but the learned, the geniuses of the world, have subjected themselves to this so-called torture. Emperors and empresses, kings and queens, eminent judges and skilful lawyers, military chieftains, statesmen, philosophers, orators, poets, artists, have submitted and still submit, to this painful ordeal. You cannot account for this fact on your principle that Christ could not require confession of sins to a priest because it is too humiliating to our manhood. You cannot account for it except on the principle that all these millions were, and are, convinced in their minds, and on the most irresistible evidence, that it is an obligation, a duty, enjoined by the Founder of Christianity on all sinners who wish to be reconciled with their heavenly Father. And is it probable that a conviction so universal, so lasting, should be the result of sheer falsehood in principle or of sophistry in its application! We can understand that people will adopt false views, and follow erroneous practices on subjects which flatter human pride and human passions; but we cannot conceive it possible that any very considerable number of people, spread over different regions of the world, born with different ideas, educated in different prejudices, should conspire, and continue to conspire, in obliging themselves to the performance of certain painful duties, which, as you say, are too hard on poor human nature, too humiliating to the dignity of man,—without a well grounded conviction, that it is an obligation imposed upon them by the Author of their faith. Thus, the more you exaggerate the difficulties of confession, the more clearly you prove the divinity of its institution.

But, I would not kneel and confess to a man who has no other claim over me than his humanity. Neither do we Catholics kneel and confess to a man as man only. We recognize in the priest the ambassador of God, the dispenser of the heavenly mysteries, the minister of reconciliation. We look upon our father confessor as St. Paul desired the Corinthians to look upon himself, when he wrote: "For what I forgave, if I have

forgiven anything, for your sakes have I done it, in the person of Christ." And again: "We are therefore ambassadors of Christ, God as it were, exhorting by us. For Christ we beseech you, be ye reconciled to God."

Will you, after all this, continue to repeat that threadbare falsehood of the ignorant, that : Confession is the invention of the Pope, or of the Bishops, and priests of the Roman Catholic Church who, in order to make money and enrich themselves, have laid this burden upon their benighted people ? A remarkable invention, indeed ! Perhaps, the most wonderful and astonishing that was ever made by man.

Ask some of these wiseacres, if you please, who was its author ? What was his name ? In what century did he live ? Over what Church did he preside ? How did he manage to introduce this novelty into the Church ? Was it by dint of argument, or by the sword ? Was there no opposition to his invention ? Did the rest of the Bishops and priests accept it at once, or only gradually ? Did they all go to bed, one night, without even a suspicion that Confession might be a Christian duty, and awake the next morning convinced that it was ? Where are the proofs of all these, or any of these, necessary suppositions ? Can our adversaries produce them ? By no means. Until they are then agreed among themselves as to when Confession was introduced, and who was the man who introduced it—let them consent to hold their peace on the subject.

If Popes, Bishops, or priests really invented confession, how comes it that they did not exempt themselves from that hard and humiliating obligation ? From the Sovereign Pontiff down to the lowest cleric in the Church, every man of them is bound to go to confession, every man of them conscientiously seeks the forgiveness of his sins in the same manner as his spiritual children seek the forgiveness of theirs,—by confession to a brother, Bishop or Priest, and by the absolution pronounced by his consecrated lips.

As to confession being a money-making invention of the Catholic clergy, we have little to say. Such a charge belongs to that class of objections which time and experience have proved to be the result either of the grossest ignorance, or the most shameless propensity to slander our holy religion. If the result of the former, it calls for our sincere pity ; if of the latter, it merits our sovereign contempt.

Let me add a few more common-sense reflections. Suppose the Popes, Bishops, and priests of the Catholic Church, as you say, invented Confession, did they not prove themselves madmen by instituting a practice which, if it be painful to their people, is a hundred times more so to themselves? Binding themselves to a labor which, of all others, is the most wearing on the constitution, and, naturally speaking, the most disagreeable to the mind and heart, they doomed themselves, day after day, to the unwholesome task of being cooped up for hours in a narrow and ill ventilated box, where the variety of noisome breaths and odors is outnumbered only by the variety of the loathsome crimes and vices which are whispered in their ears. The only ministers of a Sacrament so necessary to salvation, they have obliged themselves to be ever ready to respond to the call of a wretched sinner who might need their services. And as none need the benefit of this Sacrament more than the sick and the dying, they are bound to answer the furthest as well as the nearest, the most inconvenient as well as the easiest calls made on their charity. To sit by the bedside of the dying penitent in the hospital or asylum ; to breathe the fetid, and often contagious atmosphere of the pest-house, to walk or ride for miles in all kinds of seasons and weathers, surely this so-called invention of the priests has imposed upon its authors a life-long series of terribly arduous duties which naturally impair the health of their bodies, and perhaps, endanger the salvation of their souls.

But is it not true that the practice of confession, as existing in the Catholic Church, is an encouragement to sin, and to the sinner? What more easy to a sinner than to convince himself that all he has to do, to be shrived of his most enormous trespasses is to go to his priest, confess them, and get absolution? To answer this objection nothing more is necessary than briefly to state the conditions which, besides confession proper are required of every penitent for the pardon of his sins. These conditions are : contrition and satisfaction for the sins confessed. What is contrition? A hearty sorrow and detestation of the sins committed, with a firm purpose of amendment. How many conditions must this sorrow have? It must be interior or sincere, supernatural, sovereign, and universal.

What more do our dissenting friends require for the pardon of sins?

Do they not call conversion from sin to righteousness, a change of the heart? In what does that change of heart consist, if not in the act of sorrow, just defined, by which the sinner hates, abominates, and detests all the evil he has done, and firmly, and efficaciously resolves never, never to sin again. Moreover, the motives of that sincere and universal sorrow must be supernatural; that is to say, they must be sought in the order of grace and not in the order of nature only. What more natural, than that a drunkard after spending a competency or a fortune in saloons, and grogshops, after reducing his family to poverty and destitution, should, when his eyes are opened, regret the evil consequences of his passion? that the thief, when caught in the commission of his crime, should feel sorry for the consequences of his theft? But the motives of such sorrow as this, are by no means sufficient to obtain the pardon of sin before God or the priest. Our Catholic sorrow must reach the heart. Sin is an insult to the divine majesty, a violation of divine law.

Hence, we must sorrow, either because of the deformity, the heinousness of sin in the sight of infinite justice and holiness, or because by sin we have separated ourselves from God, lost heaven and deserved hell, or because by it we have crucified anew in our hearts the Redeemer of the World. Or, better still, we should grieve through motives of pure, disinterested love.

But you will answer, if this is so, how comes it that even those Catholics who go frequently to confession, sin again and again; that the swearer still swears, and the drunkard still continues to drink? To this question I answer, first: "Judge not and you shall not be judged. Judgment without mercy to him, that has not shown mercy." Secondly: Do not the same phenomena occur in your Protestant system of confession? Do all those among you who confess themselves to God in their bed chambers, persevere in their righteousness? The real question is not, whether those who go to confession can or cannot sin again, but whether, if they do sin, they do so in virtue of confession itself? And to this we answer most emphatically, that if they sin again, they do so, not in virtue of the principles involved in confession, but in despite of them. Human nature is frail and weak; the human heart is inconstant; the best resolves of the human soul disappear like snow

melting before the sun. Passions may be checked, but they cannot be killed. Like the roots of bad weeds, they too often revive and spring up again. These evils you, as well as we, have daily to deplore ; but it remains true that the sinner who makes a proper use of the wholesome remedy of confession, will succeed in holding his passions under due control, and in avoiding a relapse into many crimes, which, without this remedy, he would probably commit, day after day, till the end of his life.

Ask those who make the best and most frequent use of confession in our Church, what is their experience on the subject. Ask that young prodigal who during many years of his passionate youth lived riotously, until health and wealth were alike wasted in drunkenness and debauchery,—what has crimsoned his once haggard cheeks with the flush of health, what has steadied his once staggering limbs, what has made him, once more, an industrious, honorable man ? He will tell you, it is confession. Ask that weeping Magdalen, once the by-word of scorn in the town, the disgrace of her family, the outcast of society, whose virtue was for sale to the highest bidder, who added theft, drunkenness, and murder to the catalogue of her crimes,—ask her what has made her the chaste, sober, and respectable girl, whom every one respects and honors. She will say : “Like my prototype in the Scriptures, I went and knelt at the feet of my Lord in the person of his minister ; I bathed them with my tears. I made an humble, a contrite confession of my sins, and they were forgiven me. I was again reinstated in the friendship and love of God and man.” Who are the best, most honorable, and respected members of our Church ? Precisely those who go frequently to confession. Whom do our separated brethren themselves trust and respect most among us ? The merchant, the lawyer, the physician, the bookkeeper, the cashier, the laborer, the servant-maid, who most frequently and devoutly approach the tribunal of Penance.

Yes, it is mainly to the confessional that the world is indebted for the little virtue that still exists among men. Many a young man or maiden living in the midst of corrupting influences, owes to confession the preservation of holy purity and innocence. Many a wedded couple ascribe to its wholesome influence the peace and happiness which preside over their hearth ! Many a blasphemer has there learned the proper use of



his tongue : to praise and bless the name of the Lord our God. Many a fornicator has there been taught the fearful consequences of his lust. Many an adulterer has there sworn eternal fidelity to the broken-hearted spouse of his love ; and many a thief and swindler has there learned not only to be just and honest, but like Zaccheus, to restore ill-gotten goods to their lawful owner, or enrich the poor with the wages of iniquity !

But the influence of confession is especially wholesome at the hour of death. You say : "I confess my sins to God." So do we, but we confess them moreover to God through his minister whom he has appointed for that purpose. When kings, emperors, and republics make peace with the nations with whom they have been at war, they do so through their representatives, their ministers, and ambassadors. The Lord of lords, and King of kings, pursues the same method. And very reasonably so. For sin being an offence against God who knows and sees all things, it is known to God the very moment it is committed. Hence, in that view, it no longer needs confession. It likewise deserves punishment ; as soon as it is committed, it deserves eternal shame and confusion. But this punishment, through the goodness and mercy of God, does not always overtake the sinner immediately. It is delayed, in the hope that the sinner may repent. What more reasonable than that God, seeing the sinner repent of his evil ways, should, in exchange for the eternal shame and confusion due to sin in hell, require of the repenting delinquent, that he should confess his sins to the priest, and suffer a momentary shame and confusion at the feet of Christ's ambassador in revealing to him all their heinousness and deformity ? But you, my friends, are left to your own judgment in this important reconciliation. Without a visible representative of the justice and mercy of heaven, you rely upon your own convictions and feelings for the certainty of reconciliation with your offended Master. How easy it is to be deceived in these convictions and especially in these emotional feelings ! How often do we find converted Protestants acknowledging that they never felt satisfied in the past with that repentance and confession to God alone, which heresy enjoins ; and, that notwithstanding their endeavors to convince themselves that it was the method of reconciliation indicated by the Scriptures, their doubts and their fears of still abiding in

God's wrath continually returned upon them ! This is especially true of the hour of death. At that dreadful moment when the hopes and fears of earth give place to conflicting anticipations of the future, when time is about to dissolve in the boundless expanse of eternity, then it is that sinful man needs something more than the deep-rooted prejudices of childhood, or the self-interested views of maturer years. Then, those whom mercy favors are willing to purchase at any price the precious pearl of God's everlasting kingdom. Then they call in the priest of the Church, and tremblingly exclaim : "Father ! I sent for you to make my peace with heaven before I die. In the frivolity of my youth, in the busy stir of manhood, I cared not, or neglected seriously to look into the secrets of eternity. Now, that I am on the brink of the fearful precipice, I crave the assistance of your steady hand to guide me safely across its threatening abyss. Father, I wish to confess all my evil thoughts, words, and deeds, and I beg of you as the minister of God, that pardon which I dare not hope from him alone ; since he has appointed you his representative, and said to you : ' Whose sins you shall remit they are remitted unto them ; and whose sins you shall retain they are retained.' " And O, how peacefully, how placidly those happy penitents sleep in the Lord, after hearing from the lips of Christ's representative : "Depart in peace ; thy sins are forgiven thee !"

Theirs is the certainty, the unwavering conviction, that, having done what they could to repent of and confess their sins, God had ratified in heaven, that sentence of absolution pronounced upon them by his ministers on earth.

ADAPTED FROM FATHER SMARIUS' LECTURES.

## LECTURE V.

## PURGATORY.

*"It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins."* (2. Macc. xii. 46.)

While the Church in virtue of her belief in the Communion of Saints, honors and venerates the spirits of the elect in heaven, and begs their intercession to obtain favors and blessings for her children, in virtue of the same faith, and from motives of true brotherly love, she offers her sacrifices and prayers to God in behalf of her departed ones who languish in the torments of purgatory. Some souls depart this life so pure as to be translated immediately into heaven ; others die in their sins, without repentance, and go to hell ; but others, again, being neither pure enough for heaven nor wicked enough for hell, are doomed to pass through a cleansing fire, wherein, before they can be admitted into heaven, God permits them to make that full satisfaction for their sins which they neglected here below. On this head, the Church teaches two things which must be believed under the pain of heresy :

- I. *That there is a Purgatory; and*
- II. *That the souls there detained are helped by the suffrages of the faithful, but principally by the adorable Sacrifice of the Altar.*

I. It is well to remember that these two points alone, are strictly of faith. All other questions on this subject are open to discussion. The Church has not determined the location of purgatory, nor decided whether it is a determined place at all. Neither has she specified how long the souls of the departed are detained in their sufferings, nor whether it is by material fire they are cleansed or merely by sorrow for their past sins. Nor has she defined the much-disputed question of

the manner in which the suffrages of the faithful are applied to their relief.

How do we prove the existence of Purgatory ?

Our first Scriptural proof is found in the second book of the Maccabees where we read the following : “ And making a gathering he (Judas Maccabeus) sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning their resurrection. (For if he had not hoped, that they that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead.) And because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness, had great grace laid up for them. It is, therefore, a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins.”

From this passage we learn that the Jews, 150 years before Christ, were accustomed to offer sacrifices and prayers for the dead, that they might be loosed from their sins, and that the Holy Ghost commends this practice, a practice which could not exist without faith in Purgatory. The Jews have always believed,—as the Catholic Church believes and teaches,—that not only can nothing defiled enter into heaven but that out of hell there is no redemption. They did not pray, therefore, for the just who quitted this life, in order to enter at once upon their rest in Abraham’s bosom ; nor for the grievous sinner who was doomed, like Dives, to everlasting misery. But they prayed for a class of souls who were in a middle state of expiation, and who could be helped by sacrifice and prayer.

It may be, and it has been, said by our separated brethren, that they do not believe in the inspiration of the books of the Maccabees. To this we answer : Whose province is it to determine what portion of the Scriptures is authentic or canonical ? Was this left to the arbitrary will of every individual, or to the same authority to which Christ committed the power of interpreting the Scriptures ? If left to every individual, how will you settle this matter on your own responsibility ? It would require years of study, a keen, discerning spirit of criticism, and much historical knowledge, to come to any fixed or reasonable conclusion ! But aside from all this, it is certain that the books of the Maccabees are authentic history, and as such they record the faith.

and practice of the Synagogue at a time when the Jews were still God's chosen people, and professed the true religion. It was in virtue of their religious convictions that they offered sacrifice and prayers for the dead. Now, if these convictions were erroneous, it seems to us that the Saviour would have warned them against such practice, and condemned the error on which they rested. While he condemned all other errors, schisms, and innovations, that had crept in among them through the teaching of the Pharisees, Sadduces, and Essenes, he was silent on this score, although the practice was an exterior one, which engaged in its behalf the most solemn rites of the synagogue,—the offering of public sacrifice and prayer. Though he often spoke to the Jews of the dead and the resurrection, he never once alluded to this practice as an error in the faith. Hence, though he did not give any explicit explanation of the doctrine, nor any explicit approbation of the practice, we are led to conclude that he gave both his sanction by his very silence.

Moreover, our Saviour taught certain doctrines whence this belief and practice may be at least indirectly deduced. Thus, in defining a certain unpardonable sin, he tells us : "He that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him neither in this world nor in the world to come." Analyze the meaning of these words. First of all, remark that our Saviour never spoke useless words. All his words were life and truth, and though heaven and earth may pass away, the word of the Lord shall not pass away ; it abides for ever and ever. According to our Lord's reasoning, then, there are some sins which are forgiven in the next world. If there is no sin forgiven in the world to come, our Saviour would have uttered one part of his sentence uselessly, unnecessarily. Now, no sin is forgiven in Heaven, because nothing defiled can enter therein. No sin can be forgiven in hell, since out of Hell there is no redemption. It remains, therefore, that, if any sin is ever forgiven in the world to come, it must be in that middle state, between Heaven and Hell, to which the Church has given the name of Purgatory. Christ, then, indirectly at least, confirmed the Jews in their belief in Purgatory.

Another indirect proof is found, also, in the passage from St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians (c. 3 : 12-15). "Now if any man build



upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire. If any man's works abide, which he has built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's works shall be burned, he shall suffer loss : but he himself shall be saved yet so as by fire." On these words Origen comments as follows : "If on the foundation of Christ, you have built not only gold, and silver, and precious stones, but also wood, and hay, and stubble, what do you expect when the soul is separated from the body ? Would you enter into Heaven with your wood, and hay, and stubble, to defile the kingdom of God, or on account of these encumbrances remain without, and receive no reward for your gold and silver and precious stones ? Neither is this just. It remains that you are committed to the fire which shall consume the light materials ; for our God, to those who can comprehend heavenly things, is called a consuming fire. But this fire consumes not the creature, but what the creature has himself built : wood, hay, stubble. It is manifest that in the first place, the fire destroys the wood of our transgressions, and then returns to us the reward of our good works." In the same manner do St. Ambrose and St. Jerome, St. Cyprian, St. Ephrem, and Tertullian comment on this passage of the Apostle.

St. Augustine, as usual, states the doctrine and practice of the Church in a few clear words : "The prayers of the Church, or of good persons, are heard in favor of those Christians who departed this life, not so bad as to be deemed unworthy of mercy, nor so good, as to be entitled to immediate happiness. So, also, at the resurrection of the dead some will be found to whom mercy will be imparted, having gone through those pains to which the spirits of the dead are liable. It would not have been said of some with truth, that their sin shall not be forgiven neither in this world nor in the world to come, unless some sins were forgiven in the next world."—Every one knows the request which Monica, the dying mother of the same great saint, addressed to him : "*This only I request of you, that you will remember me at the altar of the Lord wherever you may be !*"

It is alike curious and instructive to learn that all the leading sects of the first four or five centuries of Christianity, agreed with the

Church on this point. Thus we read in the liturgy of the Nestorians of Malabar : "Let us be mindful of our fathers and brethren, and of the faithful who departed out of this world in the orthodox faith ; let us pray the Lord to absolve them, to remit their sins and their transgressions, to make them partake of eternal felicity with the just, who conformed to the divine will." The liturgy of the Chaldean Nestorians says : "Forgive the sins and trespasses of those who are dead." The Armenians in their liturgy, say through the deacon : "We require that mention be made in this sacrifice of all the faithful in general, men and women, young and old, who departed with faith in Jesus Christ. Be mindful, O Lord, and have mercy on them ! Grant them repose, light, and a place among thy saints in thy heavenly kingdom !" Calvin, himself, could not deny that the custom of praying for the dead existed more than thirteen hundred years before his time. Luther, the great Arch-heretic, did not at first reject this humane and consoling doctrine : "As for me," he says, "who believe strongly, I might even venture to say more, who know that Purgatory exists, I can readily be persuaded that it is mentioned in the Scriptures. All that I know of Purgatory is, that souls are there in a state of suffering, and may be relieved by our works and prayers."

Reason alone teaches us that there is a third place in the world to come. God is just, he will render to every one according to his works. Those who have sinned most, he will punish most ; those who have sinned less, he will punish less ; and those who have sinned the least, will the least be punished ; and if souls have not done all the penance God's law required here below, it is natural to believe that they must satisfy God's justice hereafter. The grace of God is not lost by every sin we commit ; yet even the just man falls several times. There must, then, be a third place to cancel our debt ; and to this third place, the Church has given the name of Purgatory. If some do not like the name, and object that no such word is found in Scripture, I say, neither is the word Trinity to be found there, and yet, in the latter case, you accept the substance of a doctrine, without contending as to its Scriptural appellation. But Death, you urge, is a sufficient satisfaction for the frailties of the departing soul. Know, my friend, that Death is the punishment properly of original sin, not of actual sin, for if it were, the good and the bad would

all suffer the same punishment without any equal distribution of justice. If you reply that whatever faults the good die guilty of, will be forgiven by a general absolution at the Last Day, I desire to know where you would locate them in the meantime? Certainly, not in heaven, since they cannot enter there until all sin is forgiven; and just as certainly not in hell, where there is no hope of ever being forgiven.

If even the Seraphim tremble in the sight of God, shall not the just man, who falls seven times, tremble also? Great God! how few are there who pass from the death-bed tribunal straight to thy holy bosom! Do we not all mourn dear friends and relatives who, we know, were careless livers and full of frailties? We cannot think that a just and merciful God will condemn them to everlasting torments for little faults so far outweighed by their redeeming faith and many good works and virtues. No, no, they are but suffering for a time, and it is in our power to help them, if we will. Perhaps, even it depends on us to be the means of placing them at any moment in eternal repose. Can we have the heart to neglect them, can we close our ears to their entreaties in their utmost need? What tongue can tell their joy, their peace, their repose, when, by our prayers, we have moved God to release them from their excruciating torments! What tongue can tell their gratitude to us for this last and tender act of charity!

God is just; he must, and will, render to every one according to his works. Christ himself says: "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment." And we are convinced, too, that we know not the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh. Suppose, then, that you were surprised by death the very moment after you had uttered an idle word, without having had time to repent of it? Would you think yourself deserving of everlasting punishment in hell, because of that little word? And yet you would be called into judgment for it by your Saviour. If it is amenable to his dread sentence, it is something that deserves punishment. After death—you say—all go immediately to Heaven or to Hell; where then would you go with your idle word?—There is a distinction between sin and sin, between punishment and punishment,—a distinction evident from the Scriptures: "I say to you that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment, and whosoever shall say

to his brother *Raca*, shall be in danger of the council, and whosoever shall say to his brother thou fool, shall be guilty of hell fire." Here are three sorts of sins, and three degrees of punishments. St. John speaks of a sin that is not to death, and of a sin that is to death. Our Saviour said that he who had betrayed him, had a greater sin than Pontius Pilate who condemned him. If as you assert there is no distinction, how comes it that you allow one to your courts of justice, to your codes of criminal law? How comes it that all punishment is not capital,—that there is such a distinction as grand and petit larceny, murder in the first, second, and third degree? When your child is a little stubborn or disobedient, do you consider him as the assassin who would plunge a deadly weapon into your heart? On what do nations and individuals ground these practical distinctions in daily life, if not on the principles of the eternal law and justice which emanate from God Himself? God then is more offended by one than another transgression of his law, and inflicts a greater punishment on one than on the other. He will punish the unbeliever and blasphemer, the thief and the adulterer, more severely than the one who utters an idle word, or takes a slight pleasure in a thought of self-complacency or vanity. He will punish the murderer and perjurer more severely than the man who gives way to a slight impulse of impatience. The drunkard will fare worse than he who, while he observed the laws of temperance, drank his coffee or ate his meat, not for the glory of God (as the Apostle bids us do), but because it pleased his palate, or gratified his appetite. The woman who stands before the looking glass to make her toilet, and with a slight touch of vanity, inwardly admires at once her own beauty and the nice fit of her dress, does not commit the crime of the prostitute who, by her indecent dress and meretricious adornments, entices others to sin and corruption.

Suppose, my friends, that you were present at the death-bed of your mother. We will suppose, that she was a good woman, a virtuous wife, a loving mother, a devout Christian, after her own views of godliness. But, like most people, she had her faults. Perhaps, she was a little hasty, slightly vain, inclined to worldly-mindedness in dress and furniture, not so much, however, as to exceed her means or rank in life. She had at times bewailed these peccadillos, and been pardoned their guilt. And

now as she draws near the portals of eternity, and a burning fever is about to take away her reason, without return, she gives way to a moment's impatience, and before she has time to repent of it, she loses the use of her faculties, and dies. Have you the heart to say of that mother : "She died in sin and has gone to hell"—? And yet you know that repentance is not to be had beyond the grave, that the time of probation is passed. No ; your heart, on that occasion, as on most others, would instinctively show its Catholicity. You would drop on your knees, and exclaim : "O God, have mercy on the soul of my mother ! Receive her spirit into eternal light and peace !" And if you pray so immediately upon her departure hence—why not afterwards as well ? Why not on the third day, or in the third week, month or year after her death ?

But, you say, all departing souls will be cleansed by the merits of the blood of the Lamb. When ? After they are dead ? Without repenting, without grieving, without suffering for their faults and transgressions ? Then, hell ceases to be hell, and becomes a Purgatory,—a place of expiation, and not of reprobation. The greatest sinner in that case has the same hope laid up in his bosom as the greatest saint. Do you not see that such a doctrine is injurious to the Cross of Christ, destructive of all virtue and morality, yea of faith itself ?

II. Once more,—how about those repentant sinners who die without having fully satisfied the justice of God as to the temporal punishments which remain due to them, even though their guilt and eternal punishment may have been forgiven ? Three things have to be considered in every deadly sin : First, *the guilt*, or the outrage which the sinner offers the Lawgiver, whose law he transgresses, the Creator to whom he owes love and obedience. "If I be your Father," said God to the Jews, "where is my honor ; and if I be a Master, where is my fear ?" Second : The eternal punishment which every mortal sin deserves. Christ will condemn all unrepenting sinners who have committed deadly crimes, to everlasting fire. Lastly, the temporal punishment which is due to every sin. Immediate death of body and soul does not always follow the commission of crime. Yet iniquity of its very nature cries for punishment at the very moment it is committed. The eternal punishment



through God's mercy, is delayed. The sinner then, who would postpone his repentance till the moment of his death, would escape all punishment due to sin, if there were no other than the eternal punishments of hell. For, on the supposition that he repents at his death, he would immediately enter upon the joys of heaven. The justice of God and the nature of sin require that he should suffer a temporal punishment for his wickedness. These punishments may be so great, so numerous, on account of the many and heinous sins committed, that perfect atonement is rarely made by sinners during life. In such a case, the departed soul of a pardoned penitent does not go to hell, for he has repented, and the guilt of sin and its eternal punishment have been forgiven ; neither can he go to heaven, for some of the consequences of his sin still remain unexpiated. What remains for him, but to go to purgatory, there by temporal punishments, to make satisfaction for the consequences of his sin ? And since on earth we are allowed to pray for each other, and the prayer of the just man avails much before God, even so, after death, the prayers of the Church and her children avail much in behalf of the poor suffering souls in Purgatory.

We all know that, while God forgave Adam and Eve the guilt and eternal punishment due to their disobedience, he yet left them to undergo a long temporal punishment. We read, that David repented of his double sin of adultery and murder, and that God forgave them both through his prophet Nathan ; yet the child that was born to him was doomed to a premature death. In vain did David weep and implore the mercy of God ; in vain did he keep fast, and prostrate himself on the ground, that the child might live : "It came to pass, on the seventh day, that the child died." When, through vanity, the same great king had taken a census of his people, his heart was struck with remorse ; he confessed his sin, and prayed for pardon ; yet, notwithstanding his repentance, the prophet gave him his choice of three temporal punishments, war, famine, or pestilence. He chose the latter, and there died of the people, seventy thousand in one day !

What is the experience of our own every day life ? When your child is regenerated by the waters of Baptism, are all the consequences of original sin removed, together with its guilt and its sentence of exclusion from the kingdom of heaven ? Does it not weep and wail, is it not

subject to disease and suffering and death, as well as before? Our dissenting brethren urge that Purgatory is a most pernicious error, and moreover, contrary to Scripture, because Christ's death was an all-sufficient atonement for sin. To make man also suffer for that sin, they will tell you,—it is either a contradiction, or an assertion that more punishment is inflicted than is necessary. To this, I reply : The atonement of Christ is all sufficient for the sins of the whole world ; yet man is still condemned to suffer for his sins. What are poverty, toil, labor, sickness, and death, but punishments inflicted on sin. If no sufferings are necessary on the part of sinful man, after the all-sufficient atonement of Christ, why are not all the miseries of life, of death itself, abolished? I would like to hear this question solved on good Protestant principles. For my own part, I say, happy the man who can discharge the debt of punishment due to the justice of God by these temporary afflictions !—For such a soul there is, indeed, no Purgatory—God requires that the debtor to his justice should be cast into that prison, whence none shall go forth, till the last farthing has been paid. That prison we call Purgatory.

Cannot the ruler of a people remit a greater and inflict a less punishment on the offender against the law? Does not this happen almost daily? Is not capital punishment often commuted into imprisonment for life or for a stated term of years? And when the punishment is commuted, cannot the same ruler leave to his subjects the privilege of interceding in behalf of the prisoner, and of obtaining for him a diminution of, or entire release from, punishment? Why should not God's mercy and justice prompt him to proceed in a similar way? When, by the prayers of the priest and the people, a hardened sinner has at length been brought to repentance; when, through the merits of the saving blood of Jesus, his sin and the eternal punishment due to it, have been forgiven; when, instead of these, a certain amount of temporal punishment is inflicted,—why cannot God allow his Church and her members to come to the aid of the suffering and helpless prisoner, and by their prayers and oblations, addressed to the throne of mercy, obtain for him a partial or total release from his imprisonment?

Far from the doctrine of purgatory casting a reproach on Christ as a Saviour whose atonement was insufficient for the sins of his creatures,—the Catholic Church teaches that the merits of Christ are of them-

selves far more than sufficient to atone for all the sins of mankind. But Christ requires the co-operation of penitent souls ; and it depends on the degree of our co-operation, whether his infinite merits are applied to our souls in a more or less abundant measure. It is in the order of grace as it is in the order of nature : "In the sweat of thy brow, thou shalt eat thy bread." God's omnipotence gives growth to our grain, yet, without casting a reproach on that omnipotence, we may safely assert, that in proportion as we plow, manure, and sow, in that proportion we shall reap. He who sows sparingly, shall reap sparingly ; he who sows in blessings, shall also reap in blessings. He, then, who sows so sparingly in this world as to remain to his dying hour indebted to the divine justice, will, after his death, be compelled to pay to the last farthing, before he can be released from his prison-house of pain.

How the practice of praying for their dead can be considered injurious to the Cross and Blood of Jesus Christ, we are at a loss to perceive. Is it injurious to the Cross and Blood of Christ, when a minister of the Gospel prays for the President and the people, for the happiness and prosperity, temporal and spiritual, of his fellow-worshippers,—or when he begs God to avert from us the ravages of bloody war, the scourge of pestilence, and all other calamities, which are the effects of his wrath ? How, then, can the prayer of the same man become injurious to Christ when it is addressed for those who having departed this life, are undergoing other punishments due to their sins ? What more comforting and consoling doctrine can there be at the hour of death than that of Purgatory ! Without encouraging him in his sin, it stimulates his gratitude to God, his contrite love of his Maker, while it preserves him from that fearful despair which is the almost inevitable consequence of the contrary doctrine. Convinced as the best of us are by our own sad experience, that even the just man falls seven times, and that whosoever says he has no sin deceives himself and the truth is not in him, knowing that every one of us is bound daily to say "Forgive us our trespasses,"—how can any Christian hope to escape hell if he believes that every sin, however small, deserves eternal punishment ? How can he hope to be so pure at the hour of death, as not to deserve that horrible retribution ?

How consoling, again, the doctrine of prayers and sacrifices for the dead, to surviving relatives and friends ! To know that the flame of our love for the departed is not necessarily quenched in the darkness of the grave,—to know that we can still extend a helping hand to those for whom we would have sacrificed our very lives, is a conviction, which soothes the pangs of the loss we sustain in their departure, and dries up a portion, at least, of those otherwise unavailing tears which friendship sheds over their mouldering remains.

Think, then, dear friends, think often of the dead, and offer up your prayers daily in their behalf. Remember your deceased brethren, friends and benefactors, who, though in a different state, are yet in one and the same communion with you still. Very probably, the soul of a father or a mother, a brother or a sister, a wife or a husband, is suffering great torments for sins committed on your account. This is their continual cry to you : “Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you, my friends, for the hand of the Lord has stricken me !” And though it should happen that those you pray for, are not in need of your prayers, your tenderness and charity are none the less pleasing and acceptable to God. If it be great charity to assist the distrusted in this world who suffer under the hands of God’s mercy, how much greater charity to help those who suffer in the other world under the hand of his justice !

Help, then, those who are detained in the prison of Purgatory. Descend frequently in thought into those inferior parts of just punishment, and see what the souls detained there are suffering for lesser faults than you perhaps are daily and hourly guilty of. Enter in thought into that solemn abode with a holy sorrow, tears, and contrition for your sins. Remember that the holy souls therein suffer beyond expression ; yet they suffer in the height of charity, they suffer with the comfort of angels, and their sufferings will have an end in glory. Embrace now with a love like theirs, the little afflictions you may have to endure under the hand of God’s mercy, that you may escape the much greater ones which they suffer under the hand of his justice.

ADAPTED FROM P. SMARIUS’ LECTURES.





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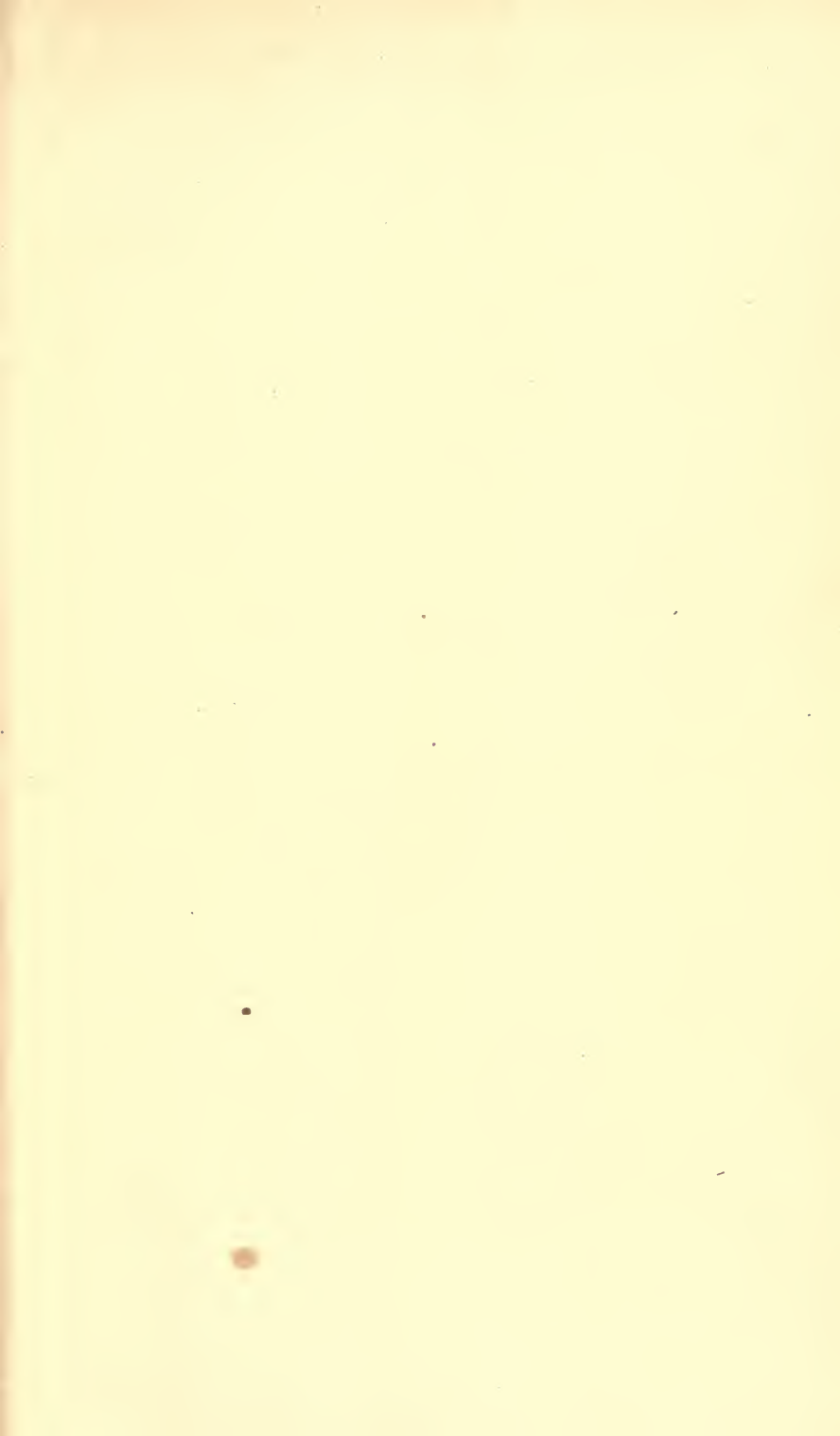
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